RETURNING TO SCHOOL, RETURNING TO LIFE:

THE TRANSFORMATION OF DISPLACED WORKERS

by

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DEDICATION

To Reanna, thank you for being supportive of my ambitions. I am grateful to have a person in my life that has been willing to sacrifice her time, in order for me to achieve my dreams. To Ainsley and Benson, find the people in your life who allow you to become the person that you want to be. The future is no place to place your better days.

I’m only this far, and tomorrow leads the way…

Dave Matthews Band

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Problem: Worker displacement is a significant public policy concern. As structural changes in the economy occur, displacement will continue to be an issue that will need to be addressed at both the Federal and state levels, as well as by those who serve displaced workers. Many studies address the quantitative aspects of worker displacement; however, there is a dearth of information on the qualitative aspects of the phenomenon. This qualitative study explored three questions. How does a displaced worker arrive at the decision to enroll in and complete a degree or certificate program? Second, what factors influence a displaced worker's decision to return to school? Lastly, how has the completion of a college degree, or certificate program impacted a displaced worker's life?

Procedures: This case study explored the concept of transitions, both as displaced workers made a the decision to go back to school, as well as the impact that school has on a displaced worker's life. A semi-structured interview protocol was created, then, interviews were conducted with nine displaced workers. Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling methods. Data analysis was conducted through the use of open and axial coding. Additionally, axial coding was used to help establish how topics and ideas could be contextualized by Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). Triangulation of the data occurred through the comparative analysis of the nine interviews, as well as interviews with the state's workforce development office.

Findings: I found that within the *self* component, a participant's explanatory style was paramount in displaced workers' understanding of their transition process. Within the *supports* component, my study found that family and faculty were important components in participants' decision to return to school and that institutional supports played a critically important role in participants' decision to move from displaced worker, to student.

Conclusion: The importance of participants' method of explaining their situation – their explanatory style – was clearly instrumental in their decision to return to, and complete schooling. In addition, and perhaps more tellingly, participants noted that institutional supports were critical to their decision to return to school, a finding that was unexpected based on the literature.

Recommendations: I implore leaders at both the federal and state level to recognize the important role that institutional supports play in helping those who become displaced. Recognition of the importance of Federal government programs is particularly salient, especially in an era of budget constraints. In addition, post-secondary personnel and faculty can more effectively facilitate and serve those displaced workers who are deciding whether or not to matriculate, or those who have matriculated, but are struggling to complete schooling, with the researcher-created list of questions for helping those who are transitioning from worker, to student.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

Overview

Worker displacement is not a new phenomenon. In the 1930s, permanent job loss in the wake of the Great Depression led to the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration which provided workforce training (O'Leary, 2010). As the 20th Century passed the halfway point, the Congress created, and President Kennedy signed into law, the Area Redevelopment Act, which provided training and relocation services to displaced workers (Jacobson, LaLonde & Sullivan, 1993b). Import competition, which ramped up in the 1960s and Reagan-era tax policy, during the 1980s, acted as a catalyst for economic restructuring thus leading to greater numbers of displaced workers (O'Leary, 2010). As a result, new Federal government programs, i.e. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act as well as the Economic Dislocation and worker Adjustment Assistance Act (EDWAA), among other Federal programs were enacted to aid those displaced (Fallick, 1996; Kletzer & Rosen, 2005; Koppel & Hoffman, 1996; O'Leary, 2010). With 15.4 million workers in the United States displaced by the most recent economic downturn, termed, the "Great Recession" (Bureau Labor Statistics, 2011; Sum, Trubskyy & McLaughlin, 2011), the worker displacement remains a significant challenge.

Upon displacement, workers have a number of potential options as they pursue reemployment. Greenberg, Michalopoulos, and Robins (2003) classified these options as, "remedial education and classroom vocational training, or skills training" (p. 35). On-the-job training in private sector jobs, or subsidized employment in the public, or non-profit sector provides additional options to those who become displaced (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Among the potential options available for displaced workers are training programs sponsored by the Federal government (Government Accountability Office, 2001). Title I of the Federal government's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 created a series of One-Stop resource centers that were intended to, "coordinate programs, services and governance structures so that the [worker] has access to a seamless system of workforce investment services" (Department of Labor, 2000). According to the Department of Labor, services provided at One-Stop centers include:

- "Assessments related to skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and support service needs…"
- "Information about local education and training service providers…"
- "Job search and placement assistance, as well as career counseling…"
- As well as, "help filing claims for UI and evaluating eligibility for job training and educations programs…" (Department of Labor, 2010).

In addition, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) helps to provide workers with cash payments, beyond Unemployment Insurance, in order to train for a new job, as well as an allowance for workers to relocate for reemployment, along with additional benefits (O'Leary, 2010). Job Corps also serves as an option to the youngest displaced workers, however given the age restrictions, such an option is likely not feasible for the vast majority of displaced workers.

Beyond publicly sponsored programs, private industry also spends money on training and development (Kochan, 2004). While private industry training may in fact prove useful on an immediate basis, Kochan (2004) quickly dismissed private industry as a long term solution for training workers and noted that while private business does invest money in training employees, "much of the training is *specific training*… that is relevant to the firm, as opposed to *general*

training that workers need to keep their skills current if they must find a job in the external labor market" (p. 75).

While several options are available to those who become displaced, Leigh (1995) noted that, "program activities must meet the needs of displaced workers" and that "displaced workers are interested in jobs, not training" (p. 10). Perhaps such a statement seems logical given that the immediate need for another source of income makes the decision to seek training a difficult choice to make. However, some inevitably make that choice. For those who choose training, Leigh (1995) noted three program characteristics necessary to meet displaced workers' interests. First, Leigh (1995) noted that any training program must be "timely and flexible," as the business cycle and resulting layoffs can occur at anytime. Second, "training programs must demonstrate to enrollees a clear connection between skills learned and employment opportunities" (p. 11), applicability of learned skills are a characteristic supported in the literature by other scholars, most notably Malcolm Knowles (1980). Lastly, Leigh (1995) noted that given the familial responsibilities of many adult workers, "tuition charged for training courses must be low or paid for by government subsidies" (p. 11).

For those who become displaced, a return to school is sometimes viewed as necessary in order to regain acceptable or desired employment (Duggan & Raspiller, 2007; Schwitzer, Duggan, Laughlin, & Walker, 2011; Kochan, 2004; Sum, Trubskyy, & McLaughlin, 2011). Community colleges play an instrumental role in providing services to those who are displaced (Ghilani, 2008; Jolley & McNamee, 2003; Kodrzycki, 1997; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). Schwitzer et al. (2011) commented, "community colleges have a well-established role in providing educational and training opportunities to meet the needs of a wide range of constituents, of which displaced workers are rightly considered" (p. 646). Kochan (2004) noted

that, “labor market and educational experts generally agree that community colleges serve a critical role in preparing the workforce for the future economy” (p. 73). Researchers have documented the myriad of services that community colleges provide (Ghilani, 2008; Jacobson, LaLonde & Sullivan, 1993b; Kodrzycki, 1997; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006), noting that the impact of community college is context-dependent. To this point, there is a dearth of information related to the long-term perspective that displaced workers had about their decision to return to community college.

Problem Statement

Recessionary periods in the US economy are nothing new, however, the recession that began in December of 2007, and officially ended in June of 2009 (NBER, 2010) hit American workers with an unparalleled tenaciousness. Between 2007 and 2009, more than 15.4 million U.S. workers were permanently displaced from their job (Sum, Trubskyy & McLaughlin, 2011). Displaced workers are defined as those workers, aged twenty or over, who have lost their job for one of three reasons: (a) their plant or company closed, (b) there was insufficient work to be completed, or (c) their position or shift was eliminated (BLS, 2008). Put in perspective, fully 11 percent of those unemployed were released from a job that was never to return again (Sum et al., 2011).

This case study examines the transition experiences of nine workers who were displaced just as the Great Recession was beginning. The participants in this case study permanently lost their jobs when their manufacturing facility closed its doors for good, in October of 2007, during the first quarter of the Great Recession. While numerous studies examine displaced workers, many are quantitative and fail to tell the story of those who become displaced. Other researchers have told the story of other displaced workers. Fouad, Cotter, Carter, Bernfeld, Gray, and Liu

(2012) focused on what were described as "working class" people. Knapp and Harms (2002) focused on workers experiencing displacement during an economic boom cycle. Walker (2012) told the story of displaced workers in the context of their experiences with Trade Adjustment Assistance.

The need to revisit the stories of those displaced has been necessitated by the fact that the Great Recession marked a point of nearly unprecedented displacement in the US economy. As Sum et al. (2011) noted, "the labor market in the US was marked by its worst performance at any time since the Great Depression… total nonfarm payroll employment did not grow at all between 2000 and 2010" (p. 18). In essence, those displaced at the start of the Great Recession have been expected to encounter greater hardship than those displaced at other times in recent memory. Schmitt (2004) noted that, "manufacturing workers have borne, and continue to bear, the largest burden of the economy's high and rising levels of job displacement" (p. 56). And as Sum et al. (2011) articulated, "high levels of job loss, especially in key good-producing industries and among many blue-collar occupations… a steep jump in the mean and median durations of unemployment, a sharp increase in underemployment, and declining labor force participation" (p. 19) create a climate less than favorable to displaced workers. However, even in the face of such daunting challenges, workers still made the decision to return to school.

Of particular interest in this research study is how Iowans who were displaced at the start of the Great Recession, perceived their transitions through the displacement process. I sought to understand and explain the processes that displaced workers experienced as they made their decision to return to school, what factors were considered as they made their decision to return to school, as well as the impact that education had on their life. Given the duration and widespread nature of the Great Recession, their process of deciding to return to school and the factors that

influenced their decision might be used by policy makers to assist displaced workers during other recessionary periods. Additionally, there is a dearth of research on how completing a sub-baccalaureate program impacts a displaced worker's life. My research attempts to fill a void that heretofore has been left unaddressed by the research. The unique perspective of this study should provide insight into what it means to be displaced at a time of unprecedented hardship, provide policy makers and educational leaders with insight to the experiences of displaced workers, and provide data on the impact of a college education on displaced workers.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the transition processes by which displaced workers from a manufacturing facility decided to return to community college as well as their perceptions of their decision to return to school, after an extended period of time. By focusing on both their initial decision to return to school, as well as their perceptions of their transition back to school a number of years later, it was my intent to examine the extent to which transition factors (Schlossberg, 1981) played a role in their decision to return and continue to play a role even after the fact, as they perceive their experience from a more long-term perspective. My study was guided by three research questions:

1) How does a displaced worker arrive at the decision to enroll in and complete a degree or certificate program?
2) What factors influence a displaced worker's decision to return to school?
3) How has the completion of a college degree, or certificate program impacted a displaced worker's life?

After completing nine interviews and completing four months of data analysis, two components of the Schlossberg Model (Anderson et al., 2012) stood out as particularly important

in the context of displaced workers. In the *self* component, the concept of *explanatory style* was particularly important. Additionally, within the *supports* component of the Model, "institutional supports" stood out as a particularly important source of support for displaced workers, particularly the support of Federal government programs. Beyond the components of the Schlossberg Model (Anderson et al., 2012), participants also discussed the importance of both family and faculty on their decision-making process. Furthermore, the role that education played in helping participants adjust to a changing workforce was of critical importance.

Study Significance

A great deal of research has been conducted on the subject of worker displacement, with much of that research being quantitative in nature and primarily focused on the effects of displacement on wages (Farber, 2005; Jacobson et al., 1993a, 1993b, 2011; Kane & Rouse, 1995; Klezter, 1998, Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003; Kodrzycki, 1997; Leigh & Gill, 1997; Ruhm, 1991). Qualitative research has also been done with regard to worker displacement (Davies, 1996; Dunk, 2002; Fouad et al., 2012; Liu, Englar-Carlson, & Minichiello, 2012). The research thus far has been oriented toward the specific period of time when a worker becomes displaced, or shortly thereafter, perhaps one or two years post-displacement (this is particularly true of studies that examine wages, post-displacement). There is a dearth of research that examines displaced workers from a more long-term perspective. This study seeks to address that gap in the literature.

By gathering and examining the data from displaced workers beyond their initial date of displacement, my research study aims to provide useful insight to several groups, including Iowa's elected officials, who are responsible for partial funding of Iowa's community colleges, as well as Iowa's community college administrators, who are likely to have the systematic vision

that allows for changes that might need to take place as a result of this research. Further, the study aims to inform Iowa's business community who are responsible for making the difficult decision to permanently reduce employment, thus leading to the continued phenomena of the displaced workers.

Summary of the Literature Review

Despite the long history of worker displaced in this country, precise estimates to the magnitude of the problem were elusive as the Federal government did not begin officially tracking displaced worker data until 1984 when it conducted the Displaced Worker Survey (DWS), as a biennial supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) (Kletzer, 1998). Displaced workers are defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as persons 20 years of age and older who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished (BLS, 2008).

The influence of displacement on the individual

Economic factors. Numerous quantitative studies, particularly in the field of economics, have been conducted to assess various aspects of worker dislocation as they relate to the individual, including: the earning losses experienced by displaced workers as they move from one industry to another (Jacobson et al., 1993a; Kodrzycki, 1997), wage loss as a result of worker unionization (Jacobson et al., 1993b), persistent earnings loss (Jacobson et al., 1993a; Ruhm, 1991; Klezter, 1998; Jacobson, LaLonde, & Sullivan, 2011), as well as the demographical characteristics and trends of displaced workers (BLS, 2008; Jacobson et al., 2011; Schmitt 2004; Sum et al., 2011).

A common element among the aforementioned studies was the fact that wage loss was a prevalent issue for displaced workers. While the magnitude of earnings loss varies, there is little

doubt that those losses are real. As Jacobson et al. (2011) noted, "workers earned 25 percent less over a ten-year period than they would have had they not been displaced" (p. 8) and that upon entering another industry, displaced workers earned 40 percent less. Moreover, the magnitude of wage loss, post-displacement, seemed to happen regardless of age. According to Jacobson et al. (1993a), the levels of loss were consistent among both older and younger workers and that their estimates affect men and women in nearly the same way, regardless of industry. Only those with less than three years on the job seemed to escape the persistent earnings loss associated with job displacement, however Klezter and Fairlie (2003) dispute those findings.

Kletzer and Fairlie (2003) examined the young adult displaced worker demographic that escaped unscathed in the Jacobson et al. (1993a) analysis and reached considerably different conclusions. Young adult displaced workers faced significant challenges albeit in a slightly different form than those more experienced displaced workers. Whereas Jacobson et al. (1993a) focused on wage loss as a result of displacement, Klezter and Fairlie (2003) noted that young adult displaced workers missed out on opportunities to generate human capital and market experience. Furthermore, displacement can be particularly troublesome for young workers, as future employers might unfairly use a young adult displaced worker's predicament against him or her, using displacement as a way to judge worker performance (Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003). While there is research to suggest that the economic effects of displacement are not always bad for those who become displaced (BLS, 2011), the preponderance of evidence suggests that displaced workers are likely to suffer some wage loss as a result of displacement.

Policy factors. Other research, again particularly situated in the field of economics, has sought to study worker displacement by examining the policy response to displaced workers. In many cases, researchers were looking at whether or not the program created through statutory

law had an impact on displaced worker earnings. For instance, Decker and Corson (1995) studied the effects of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, a program established by the Federal government in 1962 to help "promote economic liberalization by compensating workers for trade-related income losses" (p. 759). As O'Leary (2010) stated, "TAA provides extended income replacement payments like [unemployment insurance] (UI) to trade-impacted unemployed workers who have exhausted their 26 weeks of regular UI benefits" (p. 14). What Decker and Corson (1995) demonstrated was that, despite being aimed at the right people, "TAA training did not have a substantial positive effect on the earning of TAA trainees, at least in the first three years" (p. 773).

Additionally, other researchers (Ehrenberg & Jakubson, 1988) have examined Federal programs like advanced notice provisions that inform workers of an impending layoff. In the late 1980s the Federal government considered such a law. At the time Ehrenburg and Jakubson (1988) reported that advance notice programs were ultimately inconclusive and that one's view of advanced notice provisions and their effectiveness likely depended on one's perception labor markets. Later, O'Leary (2010) noted that, in 2001, roughly one-quarter of plant shutdowns fell into the advance notice – Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act's – criteria, ultimately leading to questions of its efficacy. Later, substantial changes to the TAA program occurred as a result of the passage of the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement Transitional Adjustment Assistance program (NAFTA-TAA) was created (O'Leary, 2010). NAFTA-TAA amended TAA legislation and provided additional benefits to those displaced by import competition.

Educational factors. Displaced workers who seek to continue their education have typically enrolled in short-term programs either as a result of Federal benefits (O'Leary, 2010),

or as their own matter of choosing (Jacobson et al., 2005). The term "education" has been applied to a variety of educational experiences available to displaced workers. In some cases, education has meant job search training (Kodrzycki, 1997), short-term coursework (Leigh & Gill, 1997; Koppel & Hoffman, 1996), the completion of government-sponsored training programs (Jacobson et al., 2005; Walker, 2012), or participation in community college course-work regardless of degree completion (Leigh & Gill, 1997).

Researchers have typically sought to access whether a displaced worker's return to school yielded an economic benefit, the results of which have been mixed. Some researchers have demonstrated positive results. Leigh and Gill (1997), noted that males returning to a community college experienced, "an incremental effect of 8 to 10 percent from attending a non-degree program" (p.351). Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (2005) used Washington State administrative data to reach similar conclusions. Jacobson et al. (2005) paid special attention to those who were considered "older" displaced workers, a designation that was based on whether the displaced workers was under 35, or 35 years and older. In their findings Jacobson et al. (2005) noted, "community college schooling raised older displaced workers' long-term quarterly earnings by about $9 per credit… resulting in a 7% increase in earnings for older men and a 10% increase in earnings for older women" (p. 411). Results from Jacobson et al. (2005) for younger workers were even more positive, leading the researchers to conclude, "retraining seems likely to have been a sound investment" (p. 409).

Other researchers have not been as optimistic about the educational benefits for displaced workers. Koppel and Hoffman (1996) were perhaps most pessimistic about educational programming, noting, "existing programs do not lead to jobs with replacement wages… and many training programs often do not lead to any jobs" (p. 113). Further, Kodrzycki (1997) noted

that, "workers going through training generally have not been found to receive higher average pay upon reemployment than those who are otherwise similar but do not undergo training" (p. 40). Kletzer (1998) noted that evaluations of Economic Dislocation and Worker Adjustment Assistance (EDWAA) and TAA programs provided, "little reason to be optimistic" with regard to their ability to "alleviate long-terms earnings losses" (p. 132).

Design and Methodology

Case study was the research methodology chosen for this study, primarily because I was interested in understanding *why* and *how* displaced workers arrived at their decision to enroll in and complete a community college degree, as well as *how* displaced workers felt about the impact that degree completion had on their lives. Case study methodology stood out as a salient methodological choice, as my research questions were "how" or "why" questions (Yin, 2014). As Yin (2014) noted, "how" or "why" questions are more explanatory and likely are to lead to the use of a case study… as the preferred research method" (p. 10). In addition, the research study provided me no control over the behavioral events, and the phenomenon at the heart of the study was contemporary in its nature. As Yin (2014) stated, "the case study is preferred when examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated" (p. 12). Yin (2014) summarized the reason for doing a case study, stating that, "you would want to do case study research because you want to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case" (p.16). The aforementioned quote certainly spoke to me as I sought to uncover the best methodological approach for this study.

More specifically, I employed a single-case design in this study. A single-case design was appropriate for a number of reasons. First, Yin (2014) suggested that there were five

rationales for selecting a single-case design – "some cases are *critical*, others are *unusual, common, revelatory,* or *longitudinal*" (p. 51). In this case, a common case rationale has been employed. According to Yin (2014) in a common case study, "the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation… because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (p. 52).

Yin (2014) noted that multiple-case designs were preferable to single-case designs, noting, "analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case" (p.64). However, Yin (2014) demonstrated acute awareness of the complexity inherent in multiple-case design. As Yin (2014) articulated, " the conduct of a multiple-case study can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student or independent research investigator" (p. 57). Because of the parameters of this study, I have concluded that a single-case design better achieves the ends sought by the process.

Nine participants took part in semi-structured interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that a researcher should "choose a particular [interview type] based on your research goal" (p. 104). In this sense, too rigid an interview structure would have curtailed the ability of participants to tell their stories, thus violating the theoretical framework of the study. Furthermore, open-ended interviews may not have allowed me the ability to find themes or conduct a thorough analysis of the phenomenon in question. The flexibility of the semi-structured format was key in helping to promote the "analytic generalization" of my study (Yin, 2014).

Creswell (2013) noted that a, "good qualitative case study represents an in-depth understanding of the case," and that in order to do this, the researcher must collect, "many forms

of qualitative data, ranging from interviews to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials" (p. 98). As noted, nine semi-structured interviews were completed, however additional materials - particularly my own field notes and interviews with Workforce Development personnel – were incorporated in an effort to triangulate and test the analytic generalizability of my findings.

To provide the case study greater focus and to help in the collection of data for analysis, I employed the conceptual framework of Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). Schlossberg's Model proved acutely pertinent to my study. Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) stated that, "theorists have positioned transitions within a developmental framework, defining them as *turning points* or as a period between two periods of stability" (p. 30). In this case study, it was anticipated that the process of becoming displaced would have certainly represented a turning point for the participants of the study. Secondly, Schlossberg's Model focused on the individual transitions, relational transitions, as well as work transitions of adults (Anderson et al., 2012) and given the nature of the displacement, it was expected that participants would experience transitions in each of the three areas. Furthermore, the 4S Model of Transitions – *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies* provided a framework upon which to structure participant interviews and contextualize the study.

There is research on the topic of displaced workers, occurring across a variety of academic disciplines. Studies focus on the persistent earnings loss faced by displaced workers (Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003; Jacobson, LaLonde & Sullivan, 1993a, 2011 & Ruhm, 1991), as well as wage rate subsidies for displaced workers (Davidson & Woodbury, 1995; Jacobson et al., 2011). Other researchers focus on the historical trends related to job displacement (Kletzer, 1998; Schmitt, 2004), as well as the demographics (e.g. blue-collar vs. white-collar) of job

displacement (Kletzer, 1998; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). Still other researchers have chosen to narrow their focus, by directing their attention to specific groups of displaced workers (Fouad, Cotter, Carter, Bernfeld, Gray, & Liu, 2012; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006) or specific locales (Jacobson et al., 1993a; Ghilani, 2008), or by focusing on how worker displacement affects the family unit (Perrucci, 1994).

More specifically, those studies that focus on Iowans (Entz, 2010; Mihm-herold, 2010 & Samuels, 2009) do not employ the Schlossberg's Model of Transitions (Anderson et al., 2012) as a theoretical framework. Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions, as articulated in Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg (2012) noted that three major aspects exist within any transition:

(a) Approaching Transitions: Transition Identification and Transition Process

(b) Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4S Model of Transitions

(c) Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources (p. 38)

To extrapolate on the 4S system, Schlossberg argued that *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies*, taken collectively, allow for the "identification of potential resources someone possesses to cope with [a] transition" (p. 38). As Anderson et al. (2012) stated, "the 4S Model… employs a ratio of assets to liabilities and allows for changes in the ratio as an individual's situation changes" (p. 63). The combination of this factors lead to individuals experiencing the same event in very different ways.

An individual's *situation* can be affected by a series of factors including:

(a) Trigger – What set off the transition?

(b) Timing – How does the transition relate to one's social dock?

(c) Control – What aspects of the transition can one control?

(d) Role change – Does the transition involve a role change?

(e) Duration – Is the transition seen as permanent or temporary?

(f) Previous experience with a similar transition – How has the individual met similar transitions?

(g) Concurrent stress – What and how great are the stresses facing the individual now, if any?

(h) Assessment – Does the individual view the situation positively, negatively, or as benign? (Anderson et al., 2012, pp. 67-68)

The combination of the aforementioned factors lead to individuals experiencing the same event in very different ways.

According to Anderson et al. (2012) " every individual [or *self*] has both assets and liabilities; resources and deficits… that an individual brings to the transition" (p. 73). Anderson et al. (2012) identified six factors "particularly relevant" as individuals experience transitions:

(a) Socioeconomic status

(b) Gender and sexual orientation

(c) Age and stage in life

(d) State of health

(e) Ethnicity/culture

(f) Psychological resources

a. Ego development

b. Outlook – optimism and self-efficacy

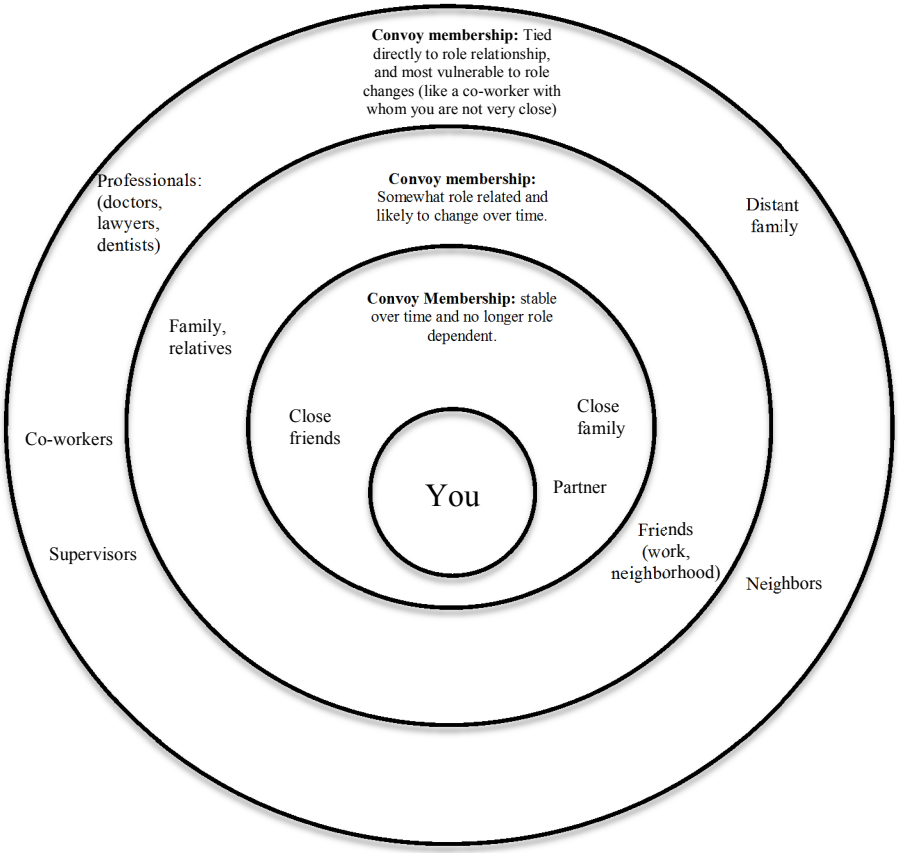
c. Commitment and values

d. Spirituality and resilience (p. 73).

Social support is a key to handling stress (Anderson et al., 2012). *Support* comprises the third S of the model. As Anderson et al. (2012) noted, "support comes in many sizes and shapes and can be for better or worse" (p. 83). Support can be derived from, "intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and the institutions and/or communities of which the people are a part" (p. 84). Anderson et al., (citing Caplan, 1976) noted that support systems "function mainly to help the individual mobilize… psychological resources and master… emotional burdens; they share… tasks… they provide… extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills, and cognitive guidance to improve… handling of… situations" (p. 85). Anderson et al. (2012) noted that Kahn (1975) introduced the idea of the "convoy" to conceptualize social support. As Kahn (1975) described it, "the idea that each person moves through the life cycle surrounded by a set of significant others related to him [or her] either by the giving or receiving of social support" (p.1). Figure 1.1 demonstrates the convoy concept, as espoused by Kahn.

Strategies constitute the final *S* of the Schlossberg Model of Transitions, specifically strategies that individuals employ to cope with stress. As Anderson et al. (2012) noted that, "coping can occur before, during, or after a stressful or challenging situation" (as cited in George & Siegler, 1981, p.37). As Anderson et al. (2012) articulated, three primary types of responses exist vis-à-vis stress, those that: (a) modify the situation, (b) attempt to control the situation, and (c) manage the stress after the fact (pp. 87-88). The coping strategies employed vary from person to person and from situation to situation. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that, "some people are clearly going to cope more effectively than others, and those with a repertoire of responses relating to their various roles will most likely handle the strains of life more effectively" (p. 88). Still others (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) argued that individuals either coped with transitions by either changing the situation, or by finding ways to relieve the stress caused by the transition

(Anderson et al., 2012). Regardless of the coping strategies used, Anderson et al. (2012) noted that, "the key is the way the person sees the strain, stressor, or event [transition] – whether it is harmful, benign, or challenging" (p. 90).



Source: (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 86)

Figure 1.1 Convoy of Social Support

My study undertook a qualitative approach in an effort to fill a gap in the knowledge regarding Iowa's displaced worker population in the wake of the Great Recession. This approach, while not lending itself toward generalizability, does lend itself toward a deeper understanding of what it means to have experienced transition as a displaced worker in Iowa, in a way that cold statistical data cannot holistically reflect. Of particular interest in my research

study was how Iowans who were displaced at the start of the Great Recession, perceived their transitions through the displacement process, what factors influenced their return to school, as well as how they perceived the impact of education on their lives.

Organization of Dissertation

My dissertation is organized into five chapters. In chapter one, I provided readers with an overview of the study, as well as a statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the theoretical framework, theoretical perspective and conceptual framework, a summary of the research, and an introduction to the design and methodology. In chapter two, I provide a broad overview of the literature that surrounds displaced workers, with particular attention being paid to the economic situation of displaced workers, the effects of displacement on individuals and families, as well as the importance of the community college system to those who become displaced. In chapter three I discuss the rationale for using case study methodology to examine the transitions experienced by displaced workers. Furthermore, I articulate how I collected data for the study, as well as how that data was analyzed. Lastly, I provide my statement of reflexivity at the end of chapter three. In chapter four, I discuss the findings of my study. Using Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions where appropriate, I discuss the major themes that resulted from this study. In addition, I discuss other themes that emerged during my study. In chapter five, I summarize the findings of the study, the theoretical implications of the study, the practical implications of the study, as well as make suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The involuntary loss of one's job, without cause, is a significant public policy problem (Guindon & Smith, 2002; Herr, 2003; Savickas, 2012; Simmons, 1995). Responses to worker displacement have varied from country to country, as well as within the United States itself. Rocha and Strand (2004) noted that, "the United States initially liberalized our trade policies in the 1930s to assist in economic recovery from the Great Depression" (p. 544). With increasingly liberalized trade policy, the Federal government created the Civilian Conservation Corps as a way to address the resulting worker displacement (O'Leary, 2010). As the 20th Century passed the halfway point, the Congress passed, and President Kennedy signed into law, the Area Redevelopment Act, which provided training and relocation services to displaced workers (Jacobson, LaLonde & Sullivan, 1993b). In the 1970s global economic conditions changed. As Dunk (2002) noted, "economic change, particularly industrial restructuring, had a serious impact on the working class in Western capitalist nations" (p. 882). The impact was not positive for American jobs; increasing competition from abroad, along with technological innovation led more people to become involuntarily unemployed (Dunk, 2002; Hartung, 2010; Hees, Rottinghaus, Briddick, & Conrath, 2012; Liu, Eaton-Carlson, & Minichiello, 2012).

While liberalized trade policy was supported in an effort to increase American exports, the US also took in more imports, which doubled by 1980, while at the same time, exports dropped by nearly 20% (Rocha & Strand, 2004). As imports increased and as exports decreased, workers again found themselves battling displacement. Again, the Federal government responded, passing the Worker Adjustment and Retraining (WARN) Act and in the 1990s, the

North American Free Trade Agreement – Transitional Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA-TAA) Act. Both were enacted to provide affected workers with advance notice of the job loss, as well as various benefits to which displaced workers are entitled. With 15.4 million workers in the United States displaced by the Great Recession (Bureau Labor Statistics, 2011; Sum, Trubskyy & McLaughlin, 2011), the issue remains a significant challenge for political leadership, educational leadership, as well as those who actually endure the lived experience of being displaced – moms, dads, brothers and sisters who did nothing to deserve their lot, but who still have to cope with catastrophic loss.

As Rocha and Strand (2004) argued, "trade policies have made it much easier for American corporations to shift their production to lower wage third world countries" (p. 543), leading to the "deindustrialization of our economy and the shift to lower paying service and retail industries" (p. 543). Work in the service and retail industries make it difficult for workers to find a job with equivalent wages and benefits (Jacobson et al., 1993b). As Chen and Lim (2012) acknowledged, "the current economic environment makes it important for [workers] to actively manage their careers. With the pervasiveness of organizational restructuring… it is likely that an average [worker] will inevitably encounter episodes of job loss and reemployment" (p. 835). In the absence of additional training, workers are likely to experience economic hardship (Rocha & Strand, 2004). Part of actively managing one's career necessarily involves the decision of whether or not to return to school.

Defining Job Displacement

A defining characteristic of the U.S. labor market has been its fluid nature (Farber, 2005). Jobs are created and destroyed in dynamic economies (Kletzer, 1998) and incidences of permanent job loss are well documented in the literature (Jacobson et al, 1993a; Kletzer, 1998;

Schmitt, 2004, Sum et al., 2011). Importantly, those displaced from their job differ considerably from those fired for cause. Job losses as a result of quitting, or being fired for cause, are not considered displacements (Kletzer, 1998). Furthermore, Leigh (1990) has stated that a displaced worker's "pre-layoff work experience, duration of post-layoff joblessness and lower wages upon reemployment" differentiate these workers from the rest of the unemployed population (p.1). As a result, displaced workers are less likely of find jobs in their old industries and thus experience unemployment differently from those who are more traditionally unemployed.

How one defines "displaced" matters greatly as varying definitions paint a very different picture of the issue and have important policy implications; those "definitions range from trade-displaced, long-tenure workers whose plants close, to… all laid off workers" (Hamermesh, 1989, p.52). As Fallick (1996) has pointed out, "government programs are often justified on the grounds that society should compensate the losers for structural changes that benefit us in the aggregate" (p. 5), hence the way in which one defines worker displacement is of significant import. The United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) currently defines displacement as "persons 20 years of age and older who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished" (BLS, 2012). Sum et al. (2011) stated that the average number of displaced workers has hovered around 2.83 million workers *per year*, with a low of 1.94 million in the period between 1985-1987 and a high of 3.80 million in the period between 2001-03. The three-year timeframe referenced by Sum et al. (2011) coincided with time period during which the 1988 DWS and 2004 DWS were conducted. Significant in their analysis, Sum et al. (2011) consider *all displaced workers* irrespective of the amount of time spent on the job (p.20).

The BLS also used the criteria listed above, but added a wrinkle, choosing to narrow the focus by analyzing displaced workers with three or more years on the job. The focus on "long-term" displaced workers by the BLS yielded significantly different findings regarding the number of displaced workers. Whereas Sum et al. (2011) found an annual average total of 2.83 million workers displaced between 1979-2009, the BLS numbers on long-term displaced workers yielded remarkably lower numbers, as demonstrated in Table 2.1. According to the data from the BLS, for the years between 1993-2011, the average annual number of people displaced was 1.38 million workers, a number roughly 2.5 times fewer than Sum et al. (2011) reported during the same period.

Table 2.1

Comparing the magnitude of displacement based on the definition of "displaced"

Year	Long-term displaced (in millions) (A)	Short-term displaced (in millions) (B)	Total[b] (A + B) = (C)	Sum et al. (2011) Displaced workers on an annual basis (C) / 3	BLS Displaced workers on an annual basis (A) / 3
2009-2011	6.1[a]	6.7 [a]	12.9[a]	4.3 million	2.03 million
2007-2009	6.9[a]	8.5[a]	15.4[a]	5.14[a] million	2.3 million
2005-2007	3.6[a]	4.6[a]	8.3[a]	2.76 million	1.2 million
2003-2005	3.8[a]	4.3[a]	8.1[a]	2.7 million	1.27 million
2001-2003	5.3[a]	6.1[a]	11.4[a]	3.8 million	1.77 million
1999-2001	4.0[a]	6.0[a]	9.9[a]	3.3 million	1.33 million
1997-1999	3.3[a]	4.3[a]	7.6[a]	2.53 million	1.1 million
1995-1997	3.6[a]	4.4[a]	8.0[a]	2.67 million	1.2 million
1995-1993	4.2[a]	5.2[a]	9.4[a]	3.13 million	1.4 million

Notes: [a]Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics press releases for selected years.
[b]Apparent errors in addition are the result of rounding.

As Sum et al. (2011) pointedly remarked, "the 2007-2009 period in U.S. labor markets was accompanied by a substantial increase in the level and rate of worker permanent [displacement] from their job" (p. 19). Unlike the average rate of 2.83 million workers displaced between 1979-2007, the number of displaced workers jumped to 5.14 million during the period

between 2007-2009, a time period that parallels the Great Recession. Even using the BLS definition, which places its focus on the long-term displaced, 2.3 million people were displaced, number which was 23% greater than the next closest time frame. What is apparent, regardless of definition, was that the number of displaced workers has recently spiked and even when the United States technically pulled out of the Great Recession, the number of workers being displaced remained historically high.

Contextualizing the Literature – Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions.

Given that Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions (1981) was the theoretical framework of the study. I decided to place as much of the review as possible in the context of the 4Ss – *situation, self, supports* and *strategies*. The rationale for this organization is two-fold. I intended to demonstrate that the theoretical framework was an appropriate choice for this study by showing how other researchers in the same general area of study have also used Schlossberg's concepts to derive meaningful findings. Additionally, I intended to demonstrate that there was a need to understand and explain the processes that displaced workers experienced as they made their decision to return to school, as well as the impact that education had on their life, particularly after being provided ample time to reflect on their experiences.

Situation and Displaced Workers

Individuals handle stressful situations in different ways, depending on their circumstances (Anderson et al., 2012). Circumstances vary in accordance with eight concepts; (a) trigger, (b) timing, (c) control, (d) role-change, (e) duration, (e) previous experience with a similar transition, (f) concurrent stress, and (g) [self] assessment (Anderson et al., 2012). While all eight of these concepts influence an individual's situation, those of *control* and *role change,* and *assessment* are particularly relevant in the literature, vis-à-vis displaced workers.

Control. When transitions are voluntary, or controlled by the individual, the transition is said to be easier than when the transition is placed on the individual by external events (Anderson et al., 2012) and "even if the transition is beyond the individual's control, the response to it can be within the individual's control" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 70). A person's perception of control over a specific stressor is an important factor in how the stressor is handled (Cook and Heppner, 1997). Utilizing Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model, Cook and Heppner (1997) conceptualized how perceived control over displacement led to either problem-based solutions for coping with displacement, or emotion-based solutions for coping with displacement. Cook and Heppner (1997) pointed out that, "problem-based coping [addresses] the alteration of the [situation] that is causing the stress," whereas "emotion-based coping alters a persons response to the stressor" (p. 65). When control over the situation was considered to be high, people are more likely to use problem-based forms of coping (Cook & Heppner, 1997). In addition, people who were likely to consider themselves effective problem solvers experienced less depression and were generally more efficacious in transitioning into a new career (Cook & Heppner, 1997).

The greater control a worker has over his or her career choices, the easier it is for the individual to take the next step toward a new occupation (Mullins & McDaniels, 1998). Reyshon (2009) in a narrative study of displaced women in Canada, noted the story of Mary, a worker who had been displaced from a manufacturing plant and who had returned to school as part of her provincial government's efforts to retrain workers, "for new careers in high demand areas" (p. 129). As Mary commented, referring to her new occupation,

> "My outlook now is very different. I will have more control over the work that I do. It is not just about the money now, it's about proving myself and taking pride

in the work I do. It's about building on what I learn at school over a lifetime of work." (p. 130)

In the case of Mary, the ability to choose a new occupation, as well as institutional assistance from the government to help her make the transition, gave Mary a sense of control over what might have been an otherwise bleak situation.

Changes in the business landscape can have drastic consequences for workers (Sales, 1995). As Sales (1995) noted, the restructuring of businesses that are "bent on financial survival" can lead to major changes for those employed by the firm (p. 483). Sales' (1995) argument is noteworthy in this study, as she suggested that, "change is most apparent in areas of the country with shrinking populations and dying industries… in these communities, being laid off or fired often triggers a downward economic spiral that may be irreversible because of structural changes in the workforce" (p. 483). Given the location of this study, in a community with a stagnant population and dying industry, Sales' words are particularly salient.

Furthermore, researchers (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Knapp & Harms, 2002; Sales, 1995) have noted that in such areas, there could be a downward occupational pattern known as "skidding." Put simply, occupational "skidding" is incurred if one suffers a, "decline in job status, pay or benefit reductions, or lower levels of work satisfaction upon reemployment" (Knapp & Harms, 2002, p. 616). Sum et al. (2011) noted that, "dislocation… may also create problems in finding new employment consistent with one's education and vocational / technical skills, thereby creating problems of mal-employment… which can lead to very large declines in economic returns" (pp. 37-38), a problem that displaced workers in particular areas have no

capacity to influence. If those who are displaced choose not to move to a different geographical location, then they may not have the ability to fully assert their preference over the next type of job that they take.

Role change. Finding a new work identity can be a challenge for displaced workers (Davies, 1996). Anderson et al. (2012) argued that, "role changes are an important aspect in determining the impact of a transition" (p. 70). The significance of a transition often has to do with the perception of the role change involved in the transition process. Role change can be made more difficult when the newly acquired role is perceived as a "loss," while the change is typically easier for those who perceive the new role as a gain (Anderson et al., 2012). Bluestone and Harrison (1982) noted that, "almost three-fifths of the displaced workers experienced a decline in occupational status" (p. 55), a component of role change. Given the employment prognosis given by current researchers (Chen & Lim, 2012; Rocha & Strand, 2004), the situation for displaced workers is not likely to have improved.

In a study of reassigned social services employees, Schlenker and Gutek (1987) found that, "work role-loss was, however, associated with lower levels of self-esteem, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction, and higher self-reported intention to turn over" (p. 290). Mallinckrodt and Bennett (1992) noted that, "[displaced] workers may face higher stresses than other unemployed workers because of lost earning potential but also because of the lost career identity" (p. 482). Interestingly, Schlenker and Gutek's (1987) study did not find that role change lead to increased amounts of work-related depression, arguing that lower levels of stress perhaps mitigated the effects of professional role loss. What is undeniable in their study was that role change certainly impacted other areas of their life and that, consistent with other findings, these roles were of diminished occupational status.

Similarly, Morse (2005) in his study of displaced textile workers observed that, "in general, the longer it took to find a first job, on average, the lower the quality of that job" (p. 412). However, as Morse (2005) later noted that while, "additional training paid off quite handsomely in overall job quality while those who had less than a high school education experienced a degrading impact in the overall quality of their first jobs after the shutdown" (p.414). Likewise, Carroll, Blatner, Alt, Schuster, and Findley (2000) in their study of displaced loggers observed that loggers typically sought out further employment with other logging firms, however at greatly reduced wages and with much less job security, both indicators of reduced occupational status. Furthermore, despite evidence that suggests education can reduce stints of unemployment and lead to greater job quality (Morse, 2005), Carroll et al. (2000) found that many of the loggers in their study simply did not experience a role change, noting that "the number who chose retraining… was comparatively small" (p. 95).

Assessment. "An individual's view of who or what is responsible for the transition affects how that individual appraises the transition" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 72), thus how and individual responds to the news of displacement undoubtedly varies. Chen and Lim (2012) discussed the importance of what they termed "psychological capital" as it related to the job search process. As part of their discussion, they noted the importance of optimism, a concept that pairs with Anderson et al. (2012) definition of assessment. Chen and Lim asserted that optimists believe that positive events in life are attributable to internal factors within the individual, whereas negative events in life are attributable to external forces that are beyond the control of the individual. Chen and Lim (2012) argued that, "a positive state of mind will have a salubrious impact on how individuals perceive their employability" (p. 813). Despite this, Amundson (1996) suggested that, "a common experience for people who are unemployed is the

feeling of personal responsibility for being out of work. Many clients blame themselves for losing their job and for each unsuccessful interview" (p. 157).

In a 2012 study of displaced white-collar workers in Sweden, Hallqvist and Hyden (2012) found that some characterized their reaction as "cool," others felt "depressed, or sad," while still others felt a sense of "relief" (p. 335). While individual factors likely influenced the way in which the notification of displacement was understood, Hallqvist and Hyden (2012) importantly noted that, "some treated their [displacement] as an opportunity to realize a vision" (p. 336). Still others did not experience the same sense of optimism, as Hallqvist and Hyden (2012) observed, "for some of them the notice of [displacement] was accompanied by grief and depression, and sometimes anger (p. 336). Liu, Englar-Carlson, and Minichiello (2010) reported similar finding in their study of midlife career transitions among scientists and engineers. However, both Hallqvist and Hyden (2012) and Liu et al. (2010) studied the effects of displacement on white-collar workers, and as Morse (2005) already noted, increased education leads to greater career opportunities. Thus, while both studies have important implications, their bias toward white-collar positions should not go unnoticed.

In much the same way that white-collar workers experience a plethora of assessment-related dilemmas, so too blue-collar workers. In Knapp and Harms' (2002) study of displaced assembly line workers at a Zenith plant, they noted that, "despite considerable status, pay, and benefit losses, displacement led to… a bimodal impact of displacement on job satisfaction" (p.616). Among those who felt satisfied with their new jobs, Knapp and Harms (2002) pointed out that they were people who felt like that had escaped a "black cloud" working for Zenith, noting, "it's pretty hard to be satisfied working for a dying company" (p. 617). Still others saw the transition very differently, "reemployment involved [the] loss of extrinsic rewards for labor,

a decline in the intrinsic meaning of work through deskilling, [and] a dimming of advancement prospects," (p. 616). Walker (2012) in a study of 13 displaced foundry workers concluded that, "a general sense of failure surrounded these workers, even though some workers will return with reduced pay and benefits" (p. 275). In this study, there wasn't a sense of optimism that any of the workers embodied, but rather the feeling that larger economic forces had forced them to pay a hefty toll that they were required to bear. Further still, in their study of 13 working class individuals Fouad et al. (2009) found that, "although faced with the stress of job loss… participants demonstrated great resiliency… and expressed a desire to take personal responsibility for their career choices despite the current economic climate" (p. 304). Similar to the white-collar studies, blue-collar workers also experience the gamut of emotions as it relates to their situation, in the wake of displacement.

Situation and the Displaced Worker, Revisited

A number of concepts affect the way a displaced worker experiences his or her situation and subsequent displacement. Anderson et al. (2012) stated that individual's situations vary in accordance with eight concepts; (a) trigger, (b) timing, (c) control, (d) role-change, (e) duration, (e) previous experience with a similar transition, (f) concurrent stress, and (g) [self] assessment. While some of these concepts have been addressed by previous literature, others have remained unaddressed, perhaps due to the idiosyncratic nature of the concept, for example, Anderson et al. (2012) concept of a "trigger" refers to any, "anticipated, or unanticipated event, or non-event, that alters one's life" (p. 68). Still what was perhaps most clear from previous research on displaced workers vis-à-vis their *situations* was that there is no uniform experience. Individuals handled similar workplace situations in very different ways, based on their individual situations.

Self and Displaced Workers

Anderson et al. (2012) noted that, "every individual has both assets and liabilities, resources and deficits" that are brought to bear on a transition (p. 73). Similar to the *situations* section, Anderson et al. (2012) have identified essentially six characteristics that are "particularly relevant for individuals as they cope with [transition]" (p. 73). These characteristics include: (a) socioeconomic status, (b) gender and sexual orientation, (c) age and stage of life, (d) state of health, (e) ethnicity and culture, and (f) Psychological resources – of which (i) ego development, (ii) outlook, (iii) commitment, and (iv) spirituality and resilience are sub components (Anderson et al., 2012).

Socioeconomic Status

Persistent earnings reductions. Perhaps the most studied aspect of worker displacement has been the resulting wage loss. Numerous researchers have considered this topic and have reached similar conclusions about wage loss (Hipple, 1999; Jacobson et al., 1993b, 2011; Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003 Knapp & Harms 2002, & Ruhm, 1991). Within the literature, two phenomena related to displaced workers and their wage experiences stand out (a) earnings dip prior to displacement, otherwise known as the "Ashenfelter Dip" and (b) for those considered highly-tenured workers, the earning losses are persistent throughout life.

Ashenfelter dip. The wage losses experienced by displaced workers is a phenomenon that occurs both prior to, as well as after being permanently laid off. Research is clear that displaced worker's wages dip prior to displacement (Jacobson et al., 1993b; O'Leary, 2010; Ruhm, 1991), a phenomena known as the "Ashenfelter Dip," named after Orley Ashenfelter who identified the concept in 1978 (O'Leary, 2010). Ruhm (1991) used Michigan Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data from 1969-1982 and found that wage adjustments began two calendar

years before permanent layoffs. In research conducted by Jacobson et al. (1993a) using administrative data from Pennsylvania for the years 1974-1986 and found that earnings began to dip three years prior to a worker's dislocation, with the rate of earnings loss increasing as the displacement date approached. Knapp and Harms' (2002) qualitative study of displaced Zenith television manufacturing workers in Missouri found that worker wages decreased by a minimum of 10.2%. As a result of wage concessions made by the Zenith workers prior to displacement, an example of the Ashenfelter Dip, the wage losses were likely much greater than those report by Knapp and Harms.

Interestingly, young adult workers did not see real wage decline prior to displacement (Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003). Instead, young workers continued to see their wages either rise, or stagnate, in the two years leading up to displacement, a finding that was inconsistent with their older colleagues who become displaced. However, wage loss as a result of displacement was only a part of the story. Prior to displacement, these workers faced declining wages in their current jobs, thus compounding their earnings loss and potentially making the transition process all the more complicating and stressful.

Highly-tenured workers experience persistently lower earnings throughout life. In addition to the earnings dip prior to displacement, displaced workers with three or more years of employment tended to suffer from long-term wage loss throughout the rest of their working careers (Jacobson et al., 1993a, 2011; Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003 & Ruhm, 1991). While the magnitude of persistent earnings loss varies, there was little doubt that those losses were real, in particular for those with three or more years on a given job. The BLS classified those workers with three or more years as "highly-tenured" workers. Ruhm (1991) studied persistent earnings loss among those who were "highly attached" to their field, using the Michigan PSID data. In

his findings, Ruhm (1991) found that displaced workers, in their fourth year following displacement, while out of work only about one week longer than those otherwise unemployed, experienced a "10-13 percent drop in earnings compared to other unemployed workers who became employed" (p. 5).

In a similar vein, research by Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (2011) used administrative data from Pennsylvania that demonstrated even greater percentage earnings loss, particularly for those considered to be "highly-tenured" displaced workers. According to Jacobson et al. (2011), "workers earned 25 percent less over a ten-year period than they would have had they not been displaced" (p. 8) and that upon entering another industry, displaced workers earned 40 percent less. Moreover, Jacobson et al. (1993b) claimed that the levels of loss are consistent among both older and younger workers and that their estimates affect men and women in nearly the same way, regardless of industry. Only those with less than three years on the job seemed to escape the persistent earnings loss associated with job displacement (Jacobson et al., 2011).

Kletzer and Fairlie (2003) examined the young adult displaced worker demographic that escaped unscathed in the Jacobson et al. (2011) analysis and reached considerably different conclusions. Young adult displaced workers faced significant challenges albeit in a slightly different form than those more experienced displaced workers. Whereas Jacobson et al. (2011) focused on wage loss as a result of displacement, Klezter and Fairlie (2003) noted that young adult displaced workers missed out on opportunities to generate human capital and market experience. Furthermore, displacement can be particularly troublesome for young workers, as future employers might unfairly use a young adult displaced worker's predicament against him or her, using displacement as a way to judge worker performance. While their economic plight

may appear better than other displaced workers, Kletzer and Fairlie (2003) have noted that when compared to their age cohort, young adult displaced worker earnings are anywhere between 20-25% less. While younger workers did not have similar wage experiences when compared to the older colleagues and in fact appear to be financially better off, such a comment must be tempered. After all, as young adult displaced workers look around at their peers, they see a very different story unfolding. The tenure difference aside, the preponderance of evidence suggests that all displaced workers are likely to suffer some wage loss as a result of displacement.

Gender. As Rampell (2009) noted, "since the 1970s, women have certainly taken up a much larger share of the work force," with nearly as many women in the workforce as there are men (para. 6). While the gap in the number of women and men in the workforce has become increasingly smaller, differences in displacement rates exist between men and women (Schmitt, 2004; Sum et al., 2011). As Wilkens and Wooden (2013) noted, "men have a considerably higher rate of job loss" and are more likely to be involuntarily released, when compared to women (p.583). The most recent recession, the "Great Recession," has also been coined the "mancession," by University of Michigan economist Mark Perry (Thompson, 2009), for the notable numbers of displaced men, when compared to women.

Part of the difference in the rates of displacement can be explained in terms of the types of jobs that men and women are likely to take. As Wilkens and Wooden (2013) stated, "it is differences in the types of jobs men and women choose that remain the source in the difference in involuntary separation rates" (pp. 603-604). As Thompson (2009) noted, "areas of the economy that boomed at the beginning of the 21st Century were eviscerated during the [recession]" (para 5). Furthermore, Thompson (2009) noted that, "nine out of ten construction workers are male, and seven out of ten manufacturing workers are men… those sectors alone

have lost more than 2.5 million jobs" (para 5). Beyond the popular literature, researchers have reached similar conclusions (Wilkens & Wooden, 2013). While such news might be seen as a positive for women, such a conclusion should be precariously drawn.

Schmitt (2004) in a study of Displaced Worker Surveys (DWS) from 1994-2004, noted that, "displaced full-time women were much less likely than displaced full-time men to be employed at the time of their DWS interview" (p. 61). Furthermore, Schmitt (2004) noted that, "women were much more likely to experience pay cuts after displacement," noting that, "of those women in full-time jobs, just over 70 percent had taken a pay cut in their new full-time job, compared to 64 percent of men" (p. 61). Schmitt (2004) also observed in his study that the reemployment rate for women was lower than that of men. While 67.5 percent of men were reemployed at the time of his study, only 61.6 percent of women could say the same (Schmitt, 2004, p. 61).

For women, the loss of a job can be especially burdensome, as the woman not only loses the ability to help support a family, but also loses a sense of self-worth that is associated with employment (Rocha & Strand, 2004). Rocha and Strand, (as cited in Gordus & Yamakawa, 1988) also noted that, women tend to have less seniority and therefore longer layoff periods than men, collect less supplemental employment benefits, and suffer much higher income losses than men after reemployment (p. 550), with the last finding being reaffirmed in more current literature (Schmitt, 2004).

Age and stage of life. Sweet (2007) noted that, "older workers are at risk for job loss for a variety of reasons" (p. 45). Older workers tend to receive the greatest compensation, making them especially vulnerable to displacement (Sweet, 2007). An addition, older workers are then faced with another set of challenges as they reenter the workforce given that they are, " among

the most likely to lack the technological skills to match the needs of rising industries" (p. 45). Sum et al. (2011) in their analysis of the Great Recession, noted that, "older workers, those aged 50 and over, had a significantly lower change of getting rehired than their younger peers… with those aged 65 and older facing the most severe hardship when looking for a job" (p. 29).

Whereas the overall reemployment rate for displaced workers was 49.2% as of January 2010 (Sum et al., 2011, p. 27), the reemployment rate for those between 60-64 was 38.3%, and fell to 17% for those aged 70-74 (Sum et al., 2011, p. 27). Clearly, older displaced workers encountered tremendous difficulty finding employment and as Sum et al. (2011) pointed out, "a fairly high fraction of them had withdrawn from [an] active job search but still desired immediate employment" (p. 27). Russell (2011) noted that, "job seekers' existing circumstances may limit their options for reemployment" (p. 58). Clearly, age can be seen as a factor that may limit the options of older displaced workers.

While older workers face significant disadvantages post-displacement, Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan (2005) demonstrated a more positive note in their study of Washington State administrative data from the early 1990s and found that for those older workers – defined by Jacobson et al. as workers aged 35 and older – who returned to school, they, "completed similar amounts of schooling" as their younger displaced counterparts (p. 403). Perhaps more importantly, by returning to school, these older displaced workers were able to "increase their quarterly earnings, post-displacement, by 7-10%" (p. 411).

As previously noted, Kletzer and Fairlie (2003) examined young adult displaced workers and noted that when compared to others in their age cohort, younger displaced workers experienced fewer opportunities to develop human capital and labor market experience. In certain respects, younger displaced workers faired comparatively better. For instance, Sum et al.

(2011) noted that while the overall reemployment rate for those displaced by the Great Recession was 49.2%, the reemployment rates for those 25-34 and 35-44 were 54.1% and 52.9%, respectively (p. 27). In addition, rate of displacement for younger workers, when compared to their older counterparts, is lower (Schmitt, 2004).

State of health. Being notified of displacement takes a heavy toll on the body. Furthermore, displacement can be a significant stressor in itself, thereby exacerbating underlying health issues, or creating news where none had previously existed (Anderson, 2012). Amundson (1996) noted that, "because of the isolation and alienation that often is associated with unemployment, it is not unusual for people to feel that the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral changes that occur are signs of something more severe, like mental instability" (p. 156). Eberts (2005) noted that after learning about displacement the, "emotions follow the typical grieving process one goes through after the death of a loved one" (p. 75). Similarly, Rocha and Strand (2004) noted that, "losing one's job is perhaps one of life's most traumatic events" (p. 542). As Cole (2009) documented, "when I heard, it was like a death. It was like someone died" (p. 544).

Schlenker and Gutek (1987) observed that, "a large-scale study of worker reactions to unemployment documented that a rise in the incidence of common colds and intestinal flu and increases in blood pressure… and norepinephrine occurred as a result of job loss" (p. 287). Rocha and Strand (2004) noted that, "the shock of losing a their jobs also correlated with high depression levels" (p. 560). Rocha and Strand (2004) focused on female displaced apparel workers and the increased levels of depression also led to more profound changes in the parenting that those women provided at home. Still further, Strully (2009) studied the impact of various types of job loss on health factors and found that, " losing a job because of establishment closure increased the odds of fair or poor health by 54% and among respondents with no

preexisting health conditions, it increased the odds of a new likely health condition by 83%" (p. 244). Additionally, Gallo, Teng, Falba, Kasl, Krumholz, and Bradley (2006) found that, "workers over 50 years of age who experience involuntary job loss are at increased risk for both subsequent myocardial infarction and stroke relative to individuals who continue to work," noting that for those displaced, there was, "more than a twofold increase in the risk of [stroke] relative to working individuals" (p. 685).

Ethnicity/culture. Additionally, a person's race plays a role in the rates of displacement experienced by workers. During the Great Recession, the total dislocation rate was roughly 11%, that is, of all workers that became unemployed, 11% of those were displaced (Sum et al., 2011). Yet a closer look at the data reveal that race influenced the rate at which one became displaced. The Caucasian rate of displacement was roughly 10%, whereas Hispanic displaced (12.8%) and African-American displacement (13.4%) were both well above the average (Sum et al., 2011). In other words African-Americans were 25% more likely to experience displacement, when compared to their Caucasian counterparts, during the Great Recession. Hispanics did not fare much better, experiencing a displacement rate nearly 22% higher than that of their Caucasian counterparts.

The racial aspect of displacement was not merely an aberration of the Great Recession. Schmitt's (2004) analysis, comparing Displaced Worker Survey (DWS) reports from 1994 and 2004 indicated that African-Americans experienced a displacement rate that was five times the size of their Caucasian counterparts. Importantly, Schmitt (2004) found that Hispanics faired significantly better, experiencing a change in displacement that was 33% smaller than their Caucasian counterparts. Hipple's (1999) analysis of DWS responses further demonstrated that African-Americans and Hispanics fared much worse when it came to job displacement. Hipple

(1999) noted, "throughout the 1980s, the displacement rate for African-American men was significantly higher than for White men" (p. 16). While not explicitly stated in Hipple's analysis, similar conclusions could be reached regarding Hispanics with the significance of their displacement being even greater than that of African-Americans. Conclusions about the impact of race on displacement rates must be tempered as a variety of factors influence displacement, as other factors undoubtedly influence whether or not one is displaced (Wilkens & Wooden, 2013). Thus, race may not be the sole factor accounting for increased displacement rates among minority populations.

Psychological resources. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) described psychological resources as, "the personality characteristics that people draw upon to help them withstand threats" (p. 5). Chen and Lim (2012) described the concept of "psychological capital" as being, "concerned with individuals' strength, perceptions, attitudes toward work, and general outlook on life" (p. 811). Chen and Lim (2012) argued for the particular salience of psychological capital as it pertained to displaced workers, noting that, "although psychological capital is important in aiding employees overcome setbacks in jobs, psychological capital is arguably more important for displaced employees because job loss is one of life's most stressful events" (pp. 811-812). Of the sub components previously mentioned, literature on *outlook* and *spirituality and resilience* are particularly noteworthy.

Outlook. Davies (1996) noted that, "in a competitive society that repeatedly gives messages that success is related only to effort, it is easy for unsuccessful job seekers to internalize blame" (p. 147). Anderson et al. (2012) stated that whether one sees their life as "half-full," of "half-empty" provides a sense of a person's outlook (p. 78). As Anderson et al. (2012) further noted, "Outlook is a result of the complex interplay of many factors… [of which]

optimism and self-efficacy are critical factors" (p. 78). Anderson, (citing Seligman, 2002) commented on the importance of an optimistic mindset, noting that people with optimistic mindsets tend to "weather setbacks and adversity better and that they tend to age better and experience fewer of the usual physical illnesses of middle age" (p. 79). Hence, an optimistic outlook can have a positive impact in many areas of one's life.

Optimists assert that positive events in life are attributable to internal factors within the individual, whereas negative events in life are attributable to external forces that are beyond the control of the individual (Chen & Lim, 2012). Relating the concept of optimism to those who have become displaced, Chen and Lim (2012) noted that, "a positive state of mind will have a salubrious impact on how individuals perceive their employability" (p. 813). In addition, one's perception of their employability directly relates to the likelihood of an individual obtaining a new job and adapting to a new occupation (Chen & Lim, 2012).

Russell (2011) reported in her narrative study of One-Stop center counselors, it was much easier to assist job seekers who looked at the transition as an opportunity. However as Russell (2011), citing a One-Stop counselor noted, "the ones that want to wallow in it for a while, we end up leaving them alone… I'll make suggestions a few times, but if they fight for their position of being stuck I let them have it, realizing they are not ready to let go" (p. 56). For some, it was possible to move past the job-loss, whereas for others, the loss of a job led to a negative outlook that created barriers and an inability to address their joblessness. As Amundson (1996) noted, "people begin to lose sight of their past accomplishments because of the stress that they are experiencing. As a result, their self-confidence declines and they are less able to conduct career exploration or job searches" (p. 156).

Self-efficacy is another important psychological resource for a displaced individual. Rodin (1990) noted that, "expectations of self-efficacy determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the confrontation of obstacles and aversive experiences" (p. 2) and research has shown that, "appraisal of [one's] problem-solving capacities is related to a person's response to stressful situations" (Cook & Heppner, 1997, p. 66). Hees, Rottinghaus, Briddick, and Conrath (2011) noted, "[displacement] can be both a time of distress and an opportunity for a new beginning, depending on how one approaches the change" (p. 335). The research would suggest that self-efficacy could play a transformative role the way that a worker addresses their displacement.

Spirituality and resilience. The literature revealed that spirituality, resilience and persistence are important parts in the complex array of factors that affect individuals. Anderson et al. (2012) operationalize spirituality by stating that it was, "central to the sense of meaning and purpose… gained from life experiences" (p. 82). Anderson et al. (2012) noted that, "resilience is not narrowed down to a specific characteristic but rather includes a blend of characteristics in an individual" (p. 83). In Cook and Heppner's (1997) study of displaced farmers, they noted that previous research indicated the importance of a higher power, noting, "having faith in God was the most frequent coping strategy employed by subjects of their study" (p. 65). Understanding how displaced workers understand the meaning and purpose of life can help to, "tap into a hidden resource for coping with transitions" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 82).

Chen and Lim (2012) discussed the importance of resiliency in their research. In their work they noted, "traversing an adverse situation such as job loss requires the capacity to overcome, bounce back, and reach out to greater career heights" (Chen & Lim, 2012, p. 814). Furthermore, Chen and Lim (2012) commented that, "despite career setbacks, resilient

employees continue to believe that they are employable and persist in their efforts to secure a job" (p. 814). While this may in fact be true, Chen and Lim did not address the concept of resiliency from a longer-term perspective, thus how displaced workers maintain their resiliency remains a question for further investigation.

Simmons (1995) noted that, "because of dramatic changes in the American workplace, issues central to the persistence of workers in retraining will become increasingly important to both the nation and to the community colleges that frequently provide retraining" (p. 49). In many cases, displaced workers are re-entering a labor market that requires more technological knowledge, more adaptability and the use of more critical thinking skills (Duys, Ward, Maxwell, & Eaton-Comerford, 2008; Owen & Fitch, 2003). As Simmons (1995) stated, "few occupations escape changes caused by technology" (p. 48). Yet to acquire the skills necessary to compete for higher-wage jobs in the labor market, displaced workers must remain in training programs.

Simmons (1995) study of displaced timber workers in the Northwest United States indicated that three factors ultimately helped displaced workers remain in training programs: (a) progress through coursework, (b) school attendance and (c) occupation. Progression through coursework and attendance were relatively self-explanatory – "occupation," as Simmons (1995) described it indicated, "[a] students likely persistence in retraining for an occupation with a high economic reward for persisting" (p.52). Also fascinating in the Simmons (1995) study, were the number of low skilled timber workers who persisted in their training. In Simmons (1995) analysis, "those with relatively low skills and fewer years of previous education," (p. 54) persisted through school. In theorizing reasons for why those with lower skill levels remained in training programs, Simmons (1995) suggested that perhaps the lack of any higher-paying alternative career drove the decision of those displaced workers.

Self and the Displaced Worker, Revisited

Similar to the *situation* component of the 4S Model of Transitions (Anderson et al., 2012), the *self* component was comprised of a number of ideas that interrelate with one another, as well as with other components of Schlossberg's Model. As Anderson et al. (2012) noted, "every person brings different assets to a transition" (p. 83) and those assets and liabilities ought to be addressed on an individual basis. Socioeconomic factors ought to be dealt with in a sensitive manner so as not to stigmatize those who have become displaced. The literature indicated that many displaced workers experienced a loss in wages, a loss in occupational status and a loss of prestige, post-displacement. Efforts should be taken by researchers to avoid exacerbating the socioeconomic effects of displacement. While the literature suggested that men are more likely to lose their jobs due to displacement, Rocha and Strand (2004) made a very compelling case for not eschewing women's plight when they go through displacement. Familial factors may make displacement even harder on women.

Beyond socioeconomic factors and gender, age and race have a clear impact on the ability of displaced workers to find reemployment. While the research has been mixed on whether or not young people are adversely affected, there was widespread agreement that the older the displaced worker is, the more difficult it is to find reemployment, with those aged 50 or over suffering the most drastic consequences. Additionally, Caucasians with higher levels of education were the most likely to obtain reemployment, while African American and Hispanic employment rates lag behind.

The involuntary loss of one's job not only has dramatic financial consequences, but the health of these workers also suffers. Increased rate of common diseases, such and the common cold have been reported in the literature and the likelihood of acquiring a chronic condition

increased dramatically as a result of displacement. More serious still, rates of stroke are higher in those who are displaced, when compared to their non-displaced counterparts.

Lastly, the psychological resources that one brings to bear on the transition can have a dramatic impact on holding at bay, some of the ill effects of displacement previously mentioned. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that spirituality and resilience could be a tremendous asset with working with those who have been displaced. Research on outlook and resilience suggest that the mere presence of a positive attitude can have a beneficial impact on a displaced individual and lead to positive results vis-à-vis their employability. Likewise, resiliency has the ability to provide a buffer against the effects of displacement. In addition, persistence plays a positive role in the reemployment prospects of those who return to school.

Support **and Displaced Workers**

Anderson et al. (2012) suggested that, "social support is often said to be the key to handling stress" (p. 83). In Russell's (2011) research, she commented that, "social support had been reported to be therapeutic for and liberating from feelings of isolation" (p. 51). Four different supports: (a) intimate, (b) family, (c) friendship, and (d) institutional were identified by Anderson et al. (2012) as types of support to which people are a part (p. 84). Research on the effects of displacement from the *family* and *institutional* perspectives have been especially pertinent in the literature.

Intimate support. Anderson et al. (as cited in Lowenthal and Weiss, 1976) stated that, "intimate relationships are an important resource during stressful transitions. Given that the involuntary loss of a job can have an impact on an individual that is equivalent to the death of a close family member, intimate relationships could be expected to be an important source of support during the transition process. Displaced women in McAtee and Benshoff's (2006) study

reported that spouses were an important source of support in their decision to return to school. The Government Accountability Office (2001) observed that the presence of a spouse allowed some workers to continue training. Rocha and Strand (2004) (citing Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1988) found that, "financial strain [of displacement] is negatively related to marital and family satisfaction" (p. 549). Job loss also increased the incidences of marital dissolution (Attewell, 1999). Additionally, Eliason (2012) in a long-term study of displaced workers in Sweden found that incidents of divorce were higher among displaced husbands, and were higher, though not significantly so, among displaced wives. The research suggests that intimate support could be both a source of strength, or could intensify underlying strains in a marriage or intimate relationship.

Family unit. While the process of becoming displaced may in fact be intensely personal, its affects are felt beyond the displaced worker. Pressures are also brought to bear on the family unit as well. Contempt for job loss (Jurich, Collins, & Griffin, 1993), divorce (Attewell, 1999, Jurich, Collins, & Griffin, 1993), loss of relational support (Hess, Rottinghaus, Briddick, & Conrath, 2012; Mazerolle & Singh, 2002), as well as adjustment issues with children (Perrucci, 1994) are among a non-exhaustive list of issues that affect family lives in the wake of job displacement.

The nuclear family can be greatly affected by the involuntary loss of a job. In Perucci's (1994) often-cited work, she stated that with respect to job loss, "the greater the perceived economic strain, the more problems they reported for [the family's] oldest child" (p.83). Chen and Lim (2012) argued that, "keeping displaced workers positive and ensuring that they find a desired job quickly can minimize the negative impact of financial hardship on their children" (p. 832). For instance, Chen and Lim (2012) found that, "children whose parents have experienced

financial hardship are more likely to seek money to overcome their self-doubts as well as view money as a tool to gain power over others" (p. 832). For families with single parent households, displacement may provide special challenges. As Rocha and Strand (2004) commented, "single parents continued to exhibit depressive symptoms and that these symptoms were significantly related to their children's behavior" (p. 561). Even if those who become displaced do find work, the nature of that work can still affect other members of the family. Rocha and Strand (2004) described, lower wage jobs not only lead to financial pressure within the family, but also impact the relationships between family members. Collectively, the research indicates that some measurable level of nuclear family disruption occurs when one involuntarily loses their job.

Friendship. Amundson (1996) stated that, "it is often important for friends and family members to reaffirm their support [for displaced workers]" (p. 156). For displaced workers returning to school, Quinlan and O'Brodovich (1996) suggested that, "classmates are an invaluable source of peer support for transition… [helping] to normalize the transition experience" (p. 179). Davies (1996) in her discussion of ways to support displaced workers, noted that, "messages delivered by peers carry more weight than those of professionals" (p. 148). And Sales (1995) described the importance of a network of friends for those displaced, noting, "households relied heavily on their own informal resources [with the] most crucial help coming from family and friends" (p. 488). Sales (1995) found that 42% of households in her study relied on family and friends help during a period of joblessness (p. 489). However, informal support structures, like a network of friends have their limits. Sales (1995) observed that, "for workers who remained unemployed beyond two years, economic support [from friends] was less likely" (p. 490).

Hees, Rottinghaus, Briddick, and Conrath (2012) noted that, "the workplace can form the basis for important social relationships and evoke a sense of belonging to a social group" (p.338). People spend much of their lives at work, as a result, "an unplanned plant closure [can] disrupt the sources of relational support within a work family" (p. 336). In a case study conducted by the aforementioned authors, Marie, a participant in the study exemplified the type of pain felt when one loses that network of friends, "crying when discussing her displacement and talking about her feelings of not being able to 'go home again'" (p. 338). The loss of a job has significant and negative economic, psychological and emotional effects for the displaced worker, as well as for those who form the social fabric in which the displaced worker exists.

Institutions. Institutional support can come from any institution that an individual can turn to for help, including, " religious institutions, political organizations, and social welfare programs" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 84). Special attention here is paid to Federal government programs that assist displaced workers.

Kletzer and Rosen (2005) stated, "the United States has a well-developed and broad set of labor-market adjustment policies and programs" (p. 314). There are a patchwork of Federal programs which serve those who become jobless through no fault of their own, including unemployment insurance as well as other statutory provisions that serve to alleviate and lessen the burden, including the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), as well as the Trade Adjustment Assistance and North American Free Trade – Transitional Adjustment Assistance (NAFTA-TAA) programs (O'Leary, 2010). Sales (1995) stated that the importance of Federal government programs have been eschewed by the scholarly community, arguing that unemployment insurance in particular had played, "a central role in buffering the effects of job loss" (p. 485). Sales (1995) found that the

economic resource a plurality of homes were likely to rely on after job loss were unemployment insurance benefits (48%) with, "56% receiving support from some Federal means-tested program" (p. 487).

Amundson (1996) found, "the most direct form of support involves financial assistance for educational training, relocation, child support" (p. 155), a type of institutional support that most likely comes from governmental resources. Other institutional actors, such as career counselors also play an important role in the support structures that are available to displaced workers.

Niles (1996) suggested that career counselors could provide "emotional, informational, and appraisal support" to those effected (pp. 164-167). Niles (1996) defined emotional support as, "providing caring, trust, and empathy to clients" (p. 164), further noting the importance of, "understanding their multiple perspectives and subjective experiences" (p. 164). Informational support was described as the process of, "enabling clients to help themselves" (Niles, 1996, p. 165).

Amundson (1996) noted the same, suggesting, "the counselor can add a new perspective by providing relevant information and by teaching clients how to access the information through their own efforts" (p. 158). Advising workers on job search techniques, providing information about job openings, providing relevant reading materials, and helping workers to understand decision-making strategies were types of informational support that counselors might provide workers (Niles, 1996, p. 165).

Amundson (1996) added an additional tactic, noting that, " the counselor, assuming the role of participant-coach, can practice role-playing activities such as telephone contacts" (p. 160). Lastly, appraisal support was defined by Niles (1996) as support that allows for the

opportunity of workers to, "acquire information that is useful in making accurate self-evaluations" (p. 166). Standardized assessments like the Salience Inventory were described by Niles (1996) as a way to facilitate the appraisal process, thereby "helping clients clarify and articulate their role self-concepts" (p. 167).

Convoy, revisited. Kahn and Antonucci (1980) argued that the Convoy Model helped to describe the different levels of relationships that individuals have with one another. Antonucci, Akiyama, and Takahashi (2004) noted that, "the convoy moves with individuals through time, circumstances, and events either helping or hindering the individual's ability to cope with life's challenges" (p. 354). Given that the involuntary loss of a job represents a major life change, one might expect to see changes in the convoys of displaced workers. As Anderson et al. (citing Kahn and Antonucci, 1980) described, social support incorporates three essential elements, "affect, affirmation, and aid" (p. 85). Anderson et al. (2012) described each of the elements as follows:

(a) affect: expressions of liking, admiration, respect, or love
(b) affirmation: expressions of agreement or acknowledgement of the appropriateness or rightness of some act or statement of another person
(c) aid: includes the exchanges of things, money, information, time, [or] entitlements (p.85).

Putting the displaced worker at the center and examining the relationships that exist between the worker and others can alter the Convoy Model. While Antonucci et al. (2004) stated that, "under ideal circumstances, relationships have a beneficial effect, helping the individual learn, grow and mature" (p. 354); displacement does not provide the ideal setting for such relationships. In some cases, "under sub-optimal conditions, the Convoy could have deleterious effects, such as

misdirecting an individual's efforts, undermining aspirations, interfering with successes and creating, rather than solving, problems" (Antonucci et al., 2004, p. 354). Little research exists that explicitly ties the Convoy Model to displaced workers (Anderson et al., 2012), however it remains reasonable to make a connection between the Convoy Model and displaced workers.

Strategies and Displaced Workers

Anderson et al. (2012) addressed the strategies that individuals use to cope with transitions as the final component of the Transition Model. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) said that, "coping responses represent some of the things that people do, their concrete efforts to deal with the life-strains they encounter in their different roles" (p. 5). How displaced workers cope with job loss is of significant importance, as their ability to cope will have financial effects, (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006), familial effects (Perrucci, 1994; Rocha & Strand, 2004), and health effects (Amundson, 1996; Anderson et al., 2012; Schlenker & Gutek, 1987), with some that could stretch well into the future (Gallo et al., 2006).

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) identified two coping strategies, (a) problem-based coping and (b) symptom-based coping. Problem-based coping, according to Chen and Lim (2012) is a "proactive strategy when individuals actively change their environment to eliminate the source of their distress" (p. 814), whereas symptom-based coping, "seeks to alleviate the immediate or emotional distress associated with a stressful event" (p. 815). Importantly, there is not a single method that one employs to cope with stress as individuals use multiple coping strategies (Chen and Lim, 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) argued much the same, stating, "some people vary their [coping] strategies as they face different situations and others using the same strategies, regardless of the situation" (pp. 92-93).

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) suggested that there were three primary types of coping, distinguishing between the three based on the "nature of their functions" (p. 6). As Pearlin and Schooler (1978) described, there are (a) responses that change the situation from which the experience arises, (b) responses that control the meaning of the experience after it occurs but prior to the stress, and (c) responses that control the stress itself after it has emerged (p. 6). Pearlin and Schooler (1978) provided examples to illuminate each of the three types:

(a) change the situation: examples include optimistic action in occupation, negotiation, and seeking advice

(b) controlling the meaning of the experience: examples include using positive comparisons, selective ignoring, and the substitution of rewards

(c) controlling the stress after the fact: examples include passive acceptance, withdrawal, magical thinking, avoidance of worry (pp. 6-7).

Chen and Lim (2012) in their study of 179 displaced individuals found that, "perceived employability directly impacts the type of coping strategies displaced employees adopt … [workers] with high levels of psychological capital tend to perceive themselves as more employable than those with lower levels" (p. 830). Therefore, as Chen and Lim (2012) noted, "displaced [workers] who possess more coping resources are better able to adopt proactive strategies to address unemployment compared with those who possess fewer such resources (p. 814).

A Recap of Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions

Situation, self, supports, and *strategies* provide the theoretical framework in which to study displaced workers. By focusing on displaced workers in the context of transitions, rich stories about an individual's *situation, self, supports,* and *strategies* for coping can help bring to

light a holistic sense of what it means to be displaced. A person's *situation* is likely to be influenced by a number of factors, including: (a) what triggered the transition, (b) when the transition occurred relative to their chronological age, (c) what type of influence was the individual able to expert of the transition, (d) did the transition involve a change in roles, and (e) how did the individual view the transition – positively, negatively, or benign. The research suggests that when an individual has some modicum of control over the situation, the individual handles the transition better (Anderson et al., 2012; Cook & Heppner, 1997). Mullins and McDaniels (1998) noted the impact of control directly to displaced workers. In cases where displaced workers lacked control, there were deleterious effects, including loss of job status, loss of social prestige, as well as loss in wages and benefits (Knapp & Harms, 2005; Sum et al., 2011).

Role change and the importance of self-assessment were also demonstrated through the literature. The impact of a role change is passed through the medium of the individual and how that individual perceives the change matters greatly in the transition process (Anderson et al., 2012). Notable in the literature is the idea that, for displaced workers, many of them will experience a decline in occupational status. As a result of this possible decline, it is important to recognize the potential negative impact this may have on displaced workers. Role change has also been associated with higher rates of turnover, as well as lower levels of self-esteem and general satisfaction with life (Carroll et al., 2000; Schlenker & Gutek, 1987). Additionally, how one assigns fault for displacement affects the transition process for the displaced individual. Those who are able to see the involuntary loss of a job as a temporary event that has been caused by external factors fair much better than those who internalize the loss and blame themselves for

their situation (Chen & Lim, 2012); Knapp and Harms (2002) study of displaced Zenith workers clearly illuminated this point.

Multiple characteristics influence how the *self* addresses the transition process, these characteristics include: (a) socioeconomic status, (b) gender and sexual orientation, (c) age and stage of life, (d) state of health, (e) ethnicity and culture, and (f) Psychological resources – of which (i) ego development, (ii) outlook, (iii) commitment, and (iv) spirituality and resilience are sub components (Anderson et al., 2012).

The characteristic of *socioeconomic status* played an important role in the transition process. Earnings reductions were well documented in the literature (Hipple, 1999; Jacobson et al., 1993a 1993b; Knapp & Harms, 2002). The literature demonstrated that the earnings of displaced workers typically fell prior to job loss (O'Leary, 2010; Ruhm, 1991). The only workers who may escape this fate are those on the younger end of the spectrum (Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003), though they still suffer in other ways. Those considered "highly-tenured" – on the job for three or more years according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, typically face lower earnings though out the rest of their life (Jacobson et al., 1993b; Ruhm, 1991).

In addition, *gender* and *age* also affect the transition process. While women have closed the employment gap, they remain less likely to experience displacement (Sum et al., 2011; Wilkens & Wooten, 2013). Such a finding suggested that while women are less likely to face displacement, for those that do, there can be an especially difficult transition to endure as a result of other responsibilities that women hold (Rocha & Strand, 2004). Furthermore, women were more likely to remain unemployed longer, thereby complicating the transition process and potentially leading to increased risk for other problems associated with displacement (Rocha & Strand, 2004). The research suggested that the older a displaced worker is, the more likely he or

she is to suffer. A lack of technological acumen, ageism (Sweet, 2007), or other factors, have led to significantly lower rates of reemployment for older workers, particularly those over 50 (Sum et al., 2011).

The transition process following displacement also impacted one's *state of health*. Whether the issues resemble those akin to mental illness, or those familiar in the process of grieving, the literature has demonstrated the detrimental effects of displacement on health (Amundson, 1996; Eberts, 2005; Rocha & Strand, 2004). In addition, other negative effects have been experienced by those who become displaced, including increased cases of the flu and common cold (Schlenker & Gutek, 1987). The rise in the incidence of these types of illnesses can be especially problematic for a displaced worker as it has the potential to negatively impact his or her ability to find other employment, or train for another occupation.

The characteristic of *race* has been well documented in the literature. General patterns have emerged from the research with Caucasians typically fairing better than either African Americans, or Hispanics (Hipple, 1999; Schmitt, 2004; Sum et al., 2011). Of the 11% of workers displaced during the Great Recession, the displacement rate for Caucasians was 22% lower than it was for Hispanics, and 25% lower than that of African Americans (Sum et al., 2011). The research also suggested further study of the issue of race, as other factors may account for the increased percentages of African Americans and Hispanics displaced, relative to Caucasians (Wilkens & Wooden, 2013).

Lastly, *psychological resources* make up an important part of an individual's ability to endure the transition process. Multiple researchers of noted the importance of an optimistic mindset (Anderson et al., 2012; Chen and Lim, 2012; Russell, 2011). In addition to an optimistic mindset, the ability to persist in the face of adversity also makes the transition process easier or

difficult, depending on the individual. Research suggested that the ability to persist could make a large difference in career outcomes post-displacement (Simmons, 1995). In some cases, the ability to persist has been aided by spirituality and resilience. Displaced farmers noted that their faith in God enabled them to endure displacement (Cook & Heppner, 1997). Chen and Lim (2012) noted that resilient workers were better able to weather their transitions and better able to find jobs. Anderson et al., (2012) noted that spirituality and resilience provide one with another avenue through which to help someone experiencing a transition.

Social *support* also has the capacity to help workers navigate the transition process upon displacement. Four types of support exist in the Schlossberg framework and include: (a) intimate support, (b) family support, (c) a network of friendship, and (d) institutional supports (Anderson et al., 2012). McAtee and Benshoff (2006) noted that spousal support when returning to school made the decision to return easier. Others displaced workers were able to remain in training as a result of a spouse (GAO, 2001). The impact of displacement on the family during a time of transition can be great. Divorce, loss of support, and issues with children are all well documented in the literature (Attewell, 1999; Hess et al., 2012; Perucci, 1994). Beyond the impact of displacement on the family, networks of friends have the capacity to act as an important source of support during the transition process that results from displacement. Peer relationships help to normalize the process (Quinlin & O'Bradovich, 1996) and support from friends often is more meaningful to those who have become displaced (Davies, 1996). In addition to being an important source of possible support, the displacement process may leave an individual without some of those who have been friends in the past. It is equally important to recognize that, just as people have nuclear families, they also have "work families" and those friendships also suffer as a result of the displacement process. Additionally, institutional support

can be brought to bear for those experiencing a transition as a result of displacement. While not limited to public sources of support, the Federal government has clearly involved itself as an institutional actor in the process of displacement. Unemployment insurance, relocation and training benefits, as well as other forms of support, such as food stamps are available to those who become displaced (Kletzer & Rosen, 2005; O'Leary, 2010). In addition, institutional support for helping professionals, such as career counselors can help those who are displaced, navigate their way through the transition process. Career counselors may provide a variety of different services, including encouragement and empathy, as well as information about different type of job training, résumé writing advice, and helping to coach someone through a mock interview process. It's unlikely that an individual will rely on a sole source of support during the transition process, but will rather rely on a convoy of individuals who share varying degrees of closeness with the affected individual, but all have the capacity to provide meaningful support.

How one chooses to cope with the transition process differs from individual to individual. The *strategies* used by one person may not work for another. One may rely on a single strategy as he or she copes with a transition, but more than likely, a person will rely on a variety of coping strategies through out the transition process (Chen & Lim, 2012). As researchers have noted, there are different ways to deal with transition, including: (a) changing the situation, (b) controlling the meaning of the experience, and (c) controlling the stress after the fact (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Coping strategies are very important in the repertoire of a displaced worker, as one's implementation of coping strategies has been found to positively impact an individual's employability (Chen & Lim, 2012).

Every individual experiences a set of circumstances that makes his or her case unique. The 4S Model of Transitions that Schlossberg provided allows one to contextualize and

compartmentalize how a wide variety of factors come together to influence an individual. In the situation of a displaced worker, such information might be useful during the displacement process as a way of providing guidance to the affected worker. It can also be useful for more thoroughly understanding what exactly it means to be displaced, not only for the individual, but also in regard to how other factors in the life of the worker contextualize his or her experience.

Community College

Impact on earnings. Community colleges play a crucial role in the lives of many displaced workers. Labor market and educational experts generally agree that community colleges serve an important role in preparing the workforce for the future economy (Kochan, 2004). Schwitzer, Duggan, Laughlin, & Walker (2011) have commented that, "community colleges have a well-established role in providing educational and training opportunities to meet the needs of a wide range of constituents… displaced workers are one of those constituencies" (p. 646). Leigh and Gill (1997) have noted the changing role of the community college, with their emphasis being geared increasingly toward vocational education, as opposed to their more traditional focus as stepping-stones to four-year institutions. The community college focus on vocational programming has been seen as particularly beneficial for displaced workers given the time and economic constraints in which many displaced workers operate (O'Leary, 2010). Furthermore, presidential administrations of both political stripes have touted the importance community college training for displaced workers (Bush, 2004; Leigh & Gill, 1997). Historically and politically, community colleges seem best suited to the task of serving displaced workers. Rocha (2001) urged that, "without additional human capital investment, either in the form of increased education or on the job training, displaced workers may take a substantial cut in pay during reemployment" (p. 57).

Despite the fact that politicians like to tout the unequivocal benefits of community college training for displaced workers, research would suggest that community college training programs provide more of a mixed bag. The ambiguity in research stems in large part from the fact that researchers tend not to compare similar data or compare the same outcomes. For instance, Kodrzycki (1997) found that training programs tended to be less effective and more costly than job-search assistance or reemployment bonuses and that "workers going through training generally have not been found to receive a higher average pay upon reemployment" (p. 40). However, Kodrzycki (1997) also noted that the failure to obtain higher average pay may not have been due to the training itself, but rather to the duration of the programs, which are typically short, less than two years, for displaced workers.

Koppel and Hoffman's (1996) study of dislocated workers questioned the idea of retraining programs in general. As they noted, "only 30 percent of the former USX workers said training was helpful in securing other jobs. Among Williams workers, 57 percent said the training was helpful. In neither case did training receive a rousing endorsement" (p. 119). The results led Koppel and Hoffman (1996) to conclude that training likely was not a good solution to displacement. Similarly, Kletzer (1998) reviewed Federal programs to aid displaced workers and commented, "there is little reason to be optimistic about the ability of these programs to alleviate long-term earning losses" (p. 132). Knapp and Harms (2002) painted a dire picture of retraining programs as well, stating that, "empirical evidence casts doubt on the overall effectiveness of worker retraining and reemployment programs (p. 610). While Kodrzycki (1997) and Kletzer (1998) measured success on the basis of wage growth, Koppel and Hoffman (1996) focused on whether or not training participants were satisfied with their training. With

the aforementioned studies in mind, one should not be too quick to dismiss community college training.

Kane and Rouse (1995) acknowledged in their study using National Longitudinal Survey data from the class of 1972, the significance of both two- and four-year college. Regarding the benefits of community college education, they stated that on average, "a person who attended a two-year college earned about 10 percent more than those without any college education, even without completing an associate's degree" (Kane & Rouse, 1995). Leigh and Gill (1997) looked specifically at community college returns for adult learners and found that adult males returning to community college – a group that better reflects the situation of displaced workers – saw an 8 to 10 percent growth in earnings by returning to community college. If such earnings increases seem paltry, it should not be surprising. LaLonde (1995) noted that, " public sector investments in training are exceedingly modest compared to the magnitude of the skill deficiencies that policymakers are trying to address" (p. 149).

Interestingly, Leigh and Gill (1997) actually saw a negative effect on earnings for adult males who either completed their bachelor's degree, or who took classes, but did not finish the degree (p. 344). However Jacobson et al. (2005) contradicted Leigh and Gill's (1997) finding. As noted previously, Jacobson et al. (2005) found that for older males and females – 35 and over – "additional school resulting in a 7% increase in earnings" (p. 406). On a related note, Jacobson et al. (2005) noted that the earnings increases were not spread evenly amongst all trainees, with "quantitative or technically oriented vocational," i.e. health-related or technical trades, courses yielding larger gains than "less quantitative courses," i.e. humanities, basic skills, or sales, courses (pp. 407-413).

More recently, Jepsen, Troske, and Coomes (2014) noted that much of the study on labor

market returns of community college focused almost entirely on the returns afforded to Associate degrees. Jepsen et al. (2014) broadened their study of labor market returns to community college degrees and included certificates and diplomas. Jepsen et al. (2014) found that consistent with prior research, women fared better than men after returning to school, noting that, "on average, women receive approximately $2,400 higher quarterly earnings for degrees or diplomas, compared to a $1,500 increase in earnings for men" (p. 97). Additionally, the researchers noted that, "the returns to certificates are around $300 per quarter for men and women" (p. 97). Contrary to the findings of Leigh and Gill (1997), more recent analyses suggest that completion of a degree was not a prerequisite to increased earnings, or in the case of Jepsen et al., increased job opportunities. Perhaps most apparent in the literature is the fact that the effects of community college, particularly with respect to earnings is varied, with research finding both positives and negatives in the data. The cold statistical data may provide important information to policymakers, but without a sense of how programs affect individuals from their point of view, they run the risk of making important policy decisions without all of the information. Even Kodrzycki (1997) who was rather pessimistic about the effects of retraining noted that research on the extent to which education puts workers on a more promising career ladder might be particularly salient.

Support strategies. Another important aspect of the community college has been the counseling department. For displaced workers who do not know where to begin in their search for a new job, a community college's counseling staff can provide a sense of direction and encouragement. Using Savickas (2012), career counseling could be categorized in one of three broad paradigms, or "patterns of practice." The first paradigm, termed "vocational guidance," placed emphasis on "the enhancement of knowledge, occupational information, as well as the

matching of oneself to an occupation" (p.15). "Career education" identified the second paradigm. As Savickas (2012) described, the focus of career education is to, "assess development status, orient an individual to developmental tasks, and lastly to develop the attitudes needed to master those tasks" (p. 15). Savickas' concept of "life design" comprised the final paradigm. Similar to his three-part description of vocational guidance and career education, Savickas (2012) described life design as, "the construction of career through small stories, the deconstruction and reconstruction of those stories into an identity narrative, and finally the co-construction of intentions that lead to the next action episode in the real world" (p. 15). Within the context of displaced workers, career interventions along each of these paradigms follow. The goal is not to determine which paradigm is best, as Savickas (2012) stated, "each paradigm for career intervention is valuable and effective for its intended purpose" (p. 17). Rather, the focus is on how each paradigm was employed and the perceived success of the intervention by the researcher.

Vocational guidance. Owen and Fitch (2003) researched a group of 83 displaced manufacturing workers in North Carolina. Holland's *My Vocational Situation* was conducted with the displaced workers, focusing on one aspect of the test, *vocational identity,* in their research. Most important from their findings, displaced workers wanted access to additional occupational information, with 77.1% of their participants responded affirmatively to the question in *My Vocational Situation* (Owen & Fitch, 2003, pp. 196-197). The importance of increased occupational information demonstrated that the vocational guidance paradigm remains an important part of career counseling. In the 21st Century, displaced workers were interested in seeking both the knowledge required for other jobs, as well as additional information about jobs not yet considered (Owen & Fitch, 2003).

On the basis of their study, Owen and Fitch (2003) suggested that community college counselors should encourage displaced workers to "try-on" new careers by making them aware of opportunities to volunteer, intern, or job shadow (p.199). By encouraging these opportunities, displaced workers would have the ability to both expand their occupational outlook, while also testing the "fit" of their personality to a new position, both of which are hallmarks of the vocational guidance paradigm.

Career education. Career education is different from vocational guidance. Whereas vocational guidance focused more on the trait preferences of individuals, career education is based on the concept that a person's cognitive development ought guide one's career choices (Duys, Ward, Maxwell, & Eaton-Comerford, 2008; Super, 1983). There are many iterations of career education counseling, however some of the better-known examples come from Super (1957) and Tiedeman (1961). Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown, and Niles (1992) stated that, "no simple process of matching people and jobs can adequately meet the needs of individuals and society" (p. 74). Inherent in each of these models is the importance of the development of the individual in career counseling process.

Duys, Ward, Maxwell, and Eaton-Comerford (2008) presented Tiedeman's Decision-Making Model as an additional example of what Savickas (2012) termed "career education" (p.15). As Duys et al. (2008) explained, "[the] model provides a framework to better understand phases associated with evolving priorities throughout life" (p. 237). Tiedeman's understanding of career education could be particularly useful for the displaced worker who, after having a stable job for a number of years, finds him or herself suddenly thrust back to square one. The non-linear nature of Teiedman's model would suggest that a person is never moving "backward," but is instead merely experiencing a different part of the decision-making process. Such an

understanding of one's career development might prove particularly beneficial for the displaced worker, as it focuses on career *development* – an activity that is ongoing throughout life, as opposed to career *traits* – something that may be seen as more static in its nature.

Life design. A third paradigm, termed "life design" is distinguished from both vocational guidance and career education in important ways. The life design paradigm has a distinctly constructivist epistemological core. As Savickas (2012) described the paradigm, "autobiographical stories lead clients through their ambiguity by creating scenarios that link future initiatives to past achievements" (p. 15). Through the life design paradigm, "[a worker] expresses his or her personal truths and authorizes an identity that transports the client into the future" (Savickas, 2012, p.15). In addition, the life design paradigm envisions the counselor as less of a person who diagnoses the client through a series of assessments, but rather facilitates the client in "formulat[ing] their identity in their own words and mapping out their system of subjective identity forms" (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 245).

Use of the narrative plays an important role in the life design paradigm (Savickas, 2012). As Savickas (2012) stated, "stories are construction tools for building identities and careers out of complex social interactions" (p. 15). Researchers have incorporated this particular element of the life design paradigm with displaced workers. Liu, Englar-Carlson and Minichiello (2012) used a narrative approach to study career transitions of 14 scientists and engineers from across the United States. Davies (1996) employed an "employment support network," or a group of ten individuals who gathered to share stories and make meaning of their experience as a displaced worker. Reliance on the worker for their narrative helps the counselee play a more active role in the counseling process and makes that person 'author of their own stories' from which he or she can build a new career (Savickas, 2012).

Additional Issues Involving Displaced Workers and Community Colleges

Adjustment to community college. Schwitzer et al. (2011) focused on community college adjustment among displaced workers in their study of 117 workers. While Schwitzer et al. (2011) had expected the displaced participants in their study to experience greater difficulty in adjusting to college coursework, just the opposite actually occurred, noting, "contrary to our hypothesis, we found no differences at all between [displaced] workers and other students on the basis of social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, or institutional attachment" (p. 658). In fact, Schwitzer et al (2011) actually suggested that displaced workers handled the academic adjustment better than other adult students who had not been displaced based on self-reported appraisals, as well as grade point average.

Location. Jepsen and Montgomery (2009) examined how the location of a community college affected adult students' decision to enroll. Jepsen and Montgomery (2009) noted that, "among students aged 24-29, 49% attended a two-year college, compared with 39% who attended a four-year school and among students over 40 year old, 63% attended two-year schools, versus 26% who attended a four-year school" (p. 64). Given that displaced workers tend to be non-traditional students, the location of a two-year school could play an important situational role for a worker. The distance that one traveled was key in determining which school to attend, or even whether to attend in the first place (Jepsen & Montgomery, 2009). According the researchers, "if mature persons had to travel a single additional mile from home to the nearest school, enrollment could fall by roughly 3 to 5%. Increasing the distance by one standard deviation (about 3.4 miles) would reduce enrollment by between 9 and 15%" (Jepsen & Montgomery, 2009, p. 71). Importantly, the study was conducted in an urban location, thus the travel expectations for participants in this study might be different from the participants in Jepsen and Montgomery's

(2009) study. The clear implication however was that community college really did need to be within the community if mature people were going to attend (Jepsen & Montgomery, 2009).

Attitudes toward training programs. Community colleges play an integral role in the delivery of Federal government training programs. Walker (2012) documented the importance of studying displaced workers' perceptions of Federal programs to help policymakers better create policy. Two findings from the Walker (2012) study stand out. First, displaced workers found the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) – the program that workers in the Walker study used – requirements "discouraging and frustrating" and noted that, "the number of forms and deadlines seemed overwhelming" (p. 271). Such a finding should be considered particularly problematic, as Federal government programs provide a key support to displaced workers. If workers feel unsupported, then the likelihood of program participation and completion could decrease.

Second, Walker (2012) noted that workers were dissatisfied with the outcomes associated with their training program, specifically, "their ability to secure employment and ability to maintain their living standards" (p. 274). Walker's (2012) study suggested that the expectations of the displaced workers, upon completion of training, might have been unrealistic. The term "dislocated" implies that one's job has been permanently lost, however many of Walker's (2012) participants expected to be recalled after completing their training. Additionally, the program that Walker studied ended up lasting an additional four months, resulting in a 14-month program, and not a 10-month program as had been the participant's expectation. The 40% increase in the length of the program undoubtedly led to dissatisfaction among the workers. While a number of situational factors led to the results, it should be noted that displaced workers are experiencing a major transition and complications on the part of program providers adds a stress that could be reduced or eliminated.

Transitions. One study in the literature used Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions as a theoretical framework. McAtee and Benshoff (2006) conducted a quantitative study of 125 rural displaced women using the Transition Guide and Questionnaire-Modified (TGQ-M). McAtee and Benshoff (2006) focused on rural women and found that Caucasian women who enrolled in community college had higher scores on the "supports" factor (p. 706) and that overall, "women who enrolled in community college for retraining had high mean support scores than women who sought immediate reemployment" (p. 707). Also noteworthy in the researchers' findings was the fact that race was a good predictor of community college retraining. As McAtee and Benshoff (2006) articulated, "women of color have the hardest time finding comparable employment after a layoff" (p. 707). In an exhaustive review of the literature, this study appeared to be the only one to incorporate the same theoretical framework as that of this study. Also important was the timeframe that the researchers studied, as McAtee and Benshoff (2006) focused on retraining and immediate reemployment, not the longer-term perspective that at the heart of this study.

Study Rationale

Although there has been a tremendous amount of work done in the field of worker displacement, little has been done to examine the transition process of displaced workers as they returned to school. Furthermore, there was little research that spoke to how displaced workers have reflected on their transition process, especially after having ample time to reflect on those experiences. This study is unique in that it provides reflection time on the transition, as opposed to questioning participants as they experienced the transition, or immediately thereafter. In addition, there has been a dearth of research that indicates the impact that retraining has had on a displaced worker's life. Research has not presented a universal conclusion as to how workers

recover after reemployment (Rocha & Strand, 2004). Kessler, Turner, and House (1989) indicated that some displaced workers have the same emotional stability as those who have been constantly employed, while other research has demonstrated that blue collar workers suffer significant emotional complications even after becoming reemployed (Liem & Liem, 1988). Still other research has indicated that the status of a new position is a prime factor in determining a displaced worker's emotional wellbeing upon reemployment (Burke, 1986). Hironimus-Wendt (2008) argued that, "there is little research on the actual process of displacement itself" (p. 73). Smith (1997) noted that there was a need for, "a deeper understanding of personal experiences and how aspirations are sustained or crushed as the opportunity structure undergoes changes that appear to be permanent and radical" (p. 335).

Absent in the literature has an understanding of how individuals navigate the transition process outside the immediate actions leading to displacement, or in its immediate aftermath. By addressing this gap in the literature, I hope to better understand the transition process experienced by displaced workers, but with the added advantage of understanding the process outside the context of the turmoil that accompanies displacement. Given that so many studies examine displaced workers as they experience the displacing circumstance, this study provides a unique perspective that can be useful to elected leaders who design and enact such policy. Furthermore, given the advantage of time and removal from the situation, the experiences of these formerly displaced workers should be seen as valuable for community college administrators, personnel, and faculty who are typically responsible for the administration of programs that affect displaced workers.

Furthermore, researchers (Hironimus-Wendt, 2008; Roach and Strand, 2004; Smith, 1997) have called for a better understanding of the personal experiences of those who have

become displaced. Jepsen et al. (2014) also documented that their findings, "add[ed] to an extremely limited literature on the returns to community college certificates and diplomas" (p. 71). However, Jepsen et al. (2014) research was purely quantitative and failed to adequately capture a holistic understanding of the impact that a community college education had on those who had become displaced. While others have started to address this need in a variety of ways (Ghilani, 2008; Hironimus-Wendt, 2008; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006; Walker, 2012), my research attempted to answer that call by addressing how displaced workers lives have been affected by their decision to return to school. As has been noted previously, displacement can lead to a host of issues and illnesses that can have an adverse effect on workers' lives. By understanding how a worker's decision to return to school has affected his or her life, we can obtain a more holistic understanding of what it means to be displaced in the 21st Century. Educational leaders and community leaders should find such information useful as they attempt to respond to the next displacement event.

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methodology that was used in this case study. This chapter starts with an explanation of the purposes of my study and the research questions posed. The theoretical framework employed by the study follows my purpose and research questions. Next, I explain the methodology employed by the study, as well as the rationale behind the methodology. Sampling methods, site selection and a brief description of the participants in the study are described. I then move into a description of the procedures employed in the data collection and analysis that were a part of this study. Next, I discuss ethical considerations taken into account for the study, addressing issues of credibility and transferability. Finally, I close with a reflexive statement that addresses issues related to my role as the researcher.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transition processes experienced by displaced workers as they made their decision to return to community college. A secondary purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of displaced workers' decision to return to school after an extended period of time. My study was guided by three research questions:

1) How does a displaced worker arrive at the decision to enroll in and complete a degree or certificate program?
2) What factors influence a displaced worker's decision to return to school?
3) How has the completion of a college degree, or certificate program impacted a displaced worker's life?

By studying how displaced workers arrived at their decision to return to school and how that transition process affected their lives, I hoped to accomplish three things. First, I wanted to understand how displaced workers arrived at their decision to return to school, grounding their rationale in the context of transitions. Second, I hoped to create an in-depth, or "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 21) of the transition process that displaced workers experienced. Lastly, I wanted to investigate the connection between the decision to return to, and complete, a degree or certificate program, and its affect on a displaced worker's life. Through this study, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners should be provided with a deeper understanding of the transition processes experienced by displaced workers and provide new insight into the effects that earning a degree or certificate has on the lives of the participants in this study.

Theoretical Framework

To help guide my data collection and analysis, I utilized a theoretical framework based on the work of Nancy Schlossberg (1981, 2012). According to Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) there are three major components within a transition:

(a) "Approaching Transitions: Transition Identification and Transition Process

(b) Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4S Model of Transitions

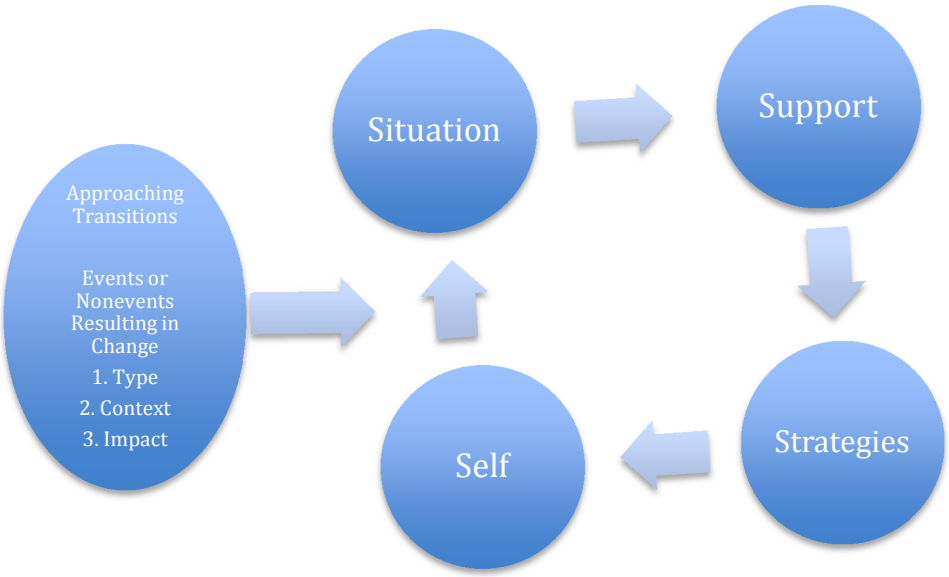
(c) Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources" (p. 38).

A full model of the theory is shown below (Figure 3.1).

Approaching Transitions

Regarding the first phase of the model, "approaching transitions," Anderson et al. (2012) stated that, "a transition is any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" and represent a "period between periods of stability" (p. 39). Transitions are considered either anticipated or unanticipated (Anderson et al., 2012).

Anticipated transitions are those transitions that are expected as a part of life, for example, marriage, birth of a child, starting a first job, and retiring are examples of anticipated transitions (Anderson et al., 2012).



Source: Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., and Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Springer.

Figure 3.1 Schlossberg's Transition Process

Transitions can also be unanticipated, or not predictable. Anderson et al. (as cited in Pearlin, 1980) noted, "events of this type in the occupational arena include being fired, laid off, or demoted" (p. 41). Unanticipated transitions are often characterized by the fact that individuals tend to have little to no control over the transition, have less time to adjust to the transition, and have to make decisions under conditions that have been considered less than ideal. Importantly, Anderson et al. (2012) argued that many researchers assume that transitions are made under ideal circumstances, and in situations where individuals have the coping resources necessary.

Lastly, there are certain types of transitions that are expected, but never occur. Anderson et al. (2012) referred to these as nonevent transitions. Examples of nonevent transitions span the

life cycle and include: “marriages that never occurred, the child who was never born, a false-positive cancer diagnosis, or never becoming a grandparent” (p. 42). Importantly, nonevents are not monolithic; rather, four types of nonevents are characterized by Anderson et al. (2012).

(a) Personal nonevents: Nonevents that are experienced by a single individual

(b) Ripple nonevents: Nonevents in one’s life that have effects on others around the individual.

(c) Resultant nonevents: Nonevents that result in other possibilities being unable to occur.

(d) Delayed nonevents: Events that have not yet occurred, but are also unlikely to occur.

Two additional points should be made about transitions. Transitions need not have a negative connotation *and* they can be seen as providing chances for growth (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) argued that, individuals determine the meaning of the transition, and not the other way around.

Potential Resources - The 4S Model of Transitions

Anderson et al. (2012) noted that the Model “is designed to depict the extraordinarily complex reality that accompanies and defines the human capacity to cope with change” (p. 61). To drive that point home even further, one need only to examine the 4S Model of Transitions (Figure 3.2).

Source: Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., and Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Springer.

Figure 3.2 The 4S Model of Transitions

The 4S Model was created with the idea that individuals have both resources and limitations, or "assets and liabilities" (Anderson et al., 2012). In the context of involuntary job loss, it is possible that two people experience the same transitional event, however one of the persons has a 12-month emergency fund, a spouse with an excellent job, has two grown children who are no longer dependent on the man for their primary source of support, and a large close-knit extended family nearby who can be relied on as a source of support. The second person, on

the other hand, has no emergency funds set aside, has a spouse who does not work as a result of a disability, and has three children still living at home. As a result, this person is responsible for being the primary wage earner in the home. Clearly, these people, while experiencing the same event, are likely to view the event in drastically different ways. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that in some cases, "assets might outweigh liabilities, making adjustment relatively easy, or liabilities might outweigh assets, so assimilation of the transition become correspondingly difficult" (p. 63). Furthermore, the 4S Model employs a ratio of assets to liabilities rather than assessing a person's mental condition in terms of health or sickness; therefore, how a person handles a transition always has the potential to be a dynamic, not static event (Anderson et al., 2012).

Moving Out of the Transition Process

Anderson et al. (2012) noted that, "in any transition, the first stage can be conceptualized as either 'moving in', or 'moving out'" (p. 56). Transitions necessarily stem from some previous state, where roles, relationships and assumptions had already been made. During a transition, people "move out" of those roles, relationships and assumptions, while "moving in" to new ones. In the case of displaced workers returning to school, they would most certainly be moving out of the role of full-time manufacturing worker, and moving into a new role, that of student. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that as soon as one has a grasp of what the new role means, i.e. "how to balance their activities with other parts of their lives and to feel supported and challenged during their new journey," one is said to be "moving through" the transition (p. 57). Finally, moving out of a transition is considered to be the point at which one ends a series of transitions, and begins to take the next steps, whatever the transition may be. As soon as an individual recognizes that the new role is "only one of the dimensions of living – the transition has been integrated" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 57).

How the Model helped to Inform Data Collection and Analysis

Anderson et al. (2012) suggested that an individual's *situation, self, supports,* as well as coping *strategies* come together to help one understand a person's relative strengths and weaknesses as they experience a transition. Given that no two people experience the exact same circumstances in life, a single event, or transition, encountered by more than two people has the ability to lead to very different outcomes. While the outcomes of a transition are likely to be different, I was primarily interested in what made these participants similar. With so many variables influencing a person's life, what was it that led this group of participants to make the decision to return to school and persist through their programming? In an effort to answer that question, I wrote interview questions that sought to understand more about each person's *situation, self, supports,* as well as coping *strategies.* The interview questions can be found in appendix (Appendix C).

I was also interested in how participants "moved out" of the transition process (Anderson et al., 2012). For all of the commonalities that might have brought these participants to complete training, I anticipated that the effects of training would be highly individualized. Therefore, my third research question, which inquired about participant perceptions of the transition process, asked participants to consider how retraining had affected their *situation,* as well as their *self* and coping *strategies*. In addition, I was interested in how participants perceived the impact of training on those around them (Anderson et al., 2012). The Model suggests that people closest to the individual experiencing the transition are likely to experience the greatest change as a result of the transition. I asked participants questions in an effort to understand whether or not they felt that the Model "played out" in this way.

I conducted analysis as the research was in process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As I coded the data, I expected to initially coded data on the basis of *supports, self, supports,* and *strategies*, however other themes emerged in the coding process. While the coding grew more complex as the analysis was refined, the Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions undoubtedly provided the initial framework for coding the data.

Case Study as a Methodology

Case study research has been utilized in a number of academic disciplines (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The methods of case study research are, however, as varied as the number of researchers who complete them. Merriam (2009) stated that a variety of methods can be used when employing case study methodology. Yin (2014) defined a case study as a way to, "investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 2). Smith (1978) noted that a case study was a bounded system. Merriam (2009) also saw the ability to delimit the object of study as the defining feature of a case study, noting that, "if the phenomenon you are interested in studying is mot intrinsically bounded, it is not a case" (p. 27). Creswell (2013) defined the case study as a method that "explores real-life, contemporary bounded system… through detailed, in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information" (p. 97).

There are many types of case studies (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). Creswell (2013) noted that, "single instrument, collective, as well as intrinsic" case studies are all available to a researcher depending on their particular focus (p. 99). Some case studies are done solely at one site, while others are done at multiple locations. Yin (2014) went a step further, suggesting that at case studies are designed around either single or multiple cases, depending on the need of the study, and that they are designed to examine either a single, holistic

level of analysis, or are designed to examine multiple concepts, known as an embedded case study. While Yin (2014) suggested that multiple case studies are preferable to single case studies, the exhaustive amount of time and resources necessary to conduct multiple case studies as a single investigator were beyond my capacity, thus I conducted a single case study. Case studies can be further differentiated by their design, holistic or embedded (Yin, 2014). Holistic design is preferred when the theoretical framework is itself, holistic in nature, or when multiple levels of analysis cannot be identified (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) suggested that embedded design, whereby the researcher incorporates multiple levels of analysis, is preferable as it can provide for a more rigorous case study.

Rationale for Using the Case Study Method

I chose to complete a case study because it allowed me to study a real-world situation (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, the case study method also provided me the ability to recognize the importance of context (Yin, 2014). Given that my research questions were "how" and "why" in their nature, an in-depth study was necessary and good qualitative case studies allow for the in-depth study of the case (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, given my interest in displaced worker's transition *process,* as opposed to finite outcomes, the case study again was deemed to be appropriate for the aims of this study (Merriam, 2009).

I chose to use a case study because I wanted to understand *how* displaced workers made their decision to return to school, especially in the face of such difficult economic circumstances. In addition, both of my research questions really aimed to get at the essence of the *processes* experienced by displaced workers and how they made meaning of their situation. To understand their experiences in an in-depth manner, I felt that interviews were essential with each of the participants. Merriam (2009) noted that case studies are used to gain in-depth knowledge of a

situation, particularly for those involved. Furthermore, I assumed that there were likely a number of contextual factors that influenced the participants to return to school and as Yin (2014) noted, case studies are appropriate when you expect important contextual conditions to influence the research. Lastly, given my interest in studying displaced workers from the time period around the Great Recession, I recognized that this was certainly a "contemporary event;" however I could not "manipulate the behaviors of the participants" (Yin, 2014, p. 12). Thus, as Yin (2014) noted, case studies have a distinct advantage when, "a how or why question is being asked about either a contemporary set of events, or something over which a researcher has little control" (p. 14). Both of these described the situation I found myself in, and consequently led to my selection of a case study as my research method.

Sampling Method

This study employed a purposeful sampling technique. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to more fully understand the issue(s) central to the study (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) noted that, "purposeful sampling rests on the assumption that the investigator want to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned." (p. 61). More specifically, the purposeful sampling technique used in this study most appropriately falls within the realm of what Merriam (2009) termed, "snowball sampling" (p. 63), and what Salmons (2013) called, "volunteer sampling" (p. 100). Snowball sampling was appropriate to my study based on the time constraints, the cost-effectiveness required, as well as the ability of participants to refer me to other participants. Relying on snowball sampling allowed me to obtain information-rich cases that are an essential component of a good qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009).

I planned to interview ten participants as a part of this case study (Patton, 1990); however, nine participants were actually interviewed as the data continued to return to similar themes. I reached out to participants via Facebook on a page that is dedicated to residents in the town where the manufacturer closed, and where there is a ready sample of people who have experience with the questions of my research study. Merriam (2009) recognized this as purposive sampling, where the sample is chosen *prior to* the data being collected (p. 66).

After communicating with the participants via email, Facebook and phone, I asked about each one's general interest in being involved in the study, if participants were initially willing to participate, I proceeded to provide each participant with a letter of informed consent. Each member of the study was provided with the informed consent well ahead of our interview and I brought a copy of the informed consent letter with me to each interview for each participant to sign. No data was collected before I received a signed letter of informed consent.

Site Selection and Research Participants

I chose to complete my single-case study in a small town in a Midwestern state for three principal reasons. First, I knew that the town had experienced a significant displacement event. Second, the displacement occurred around the time of a significant national economic downturn, a downturn that was so significant that it has become commonly known as the "Great Recession." The transition process for displaced workers in light of such dire economic prospects presented the opportunity to study an unusual case. Yin (2014) noted that single-case study design was justifiable under circumstances where the case represents an unusual circumstance.

All of the participants had to have been displaced as a result of the closing of the manufacturer, they had to have attended a post-secondary institution (primarily a community

college), they had to have enrolled in a certificate, or degree program, and they had to have completed their program of study. Upon verbal verification of these facts, I moved forward with each of the participants, asking them to participate in a roughly 60 minute interview. Before any interviews were conducted, verification of a signed informed consent form was rechecked. Interviews were digitally audio taped and participants were reminded of the risks of participating in the study. They were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they chose.

Data Collection

Case studies are challenging in the sense that data collection procedures are not consistent (Yin, 2014). In an effort to collect data in the most honest and transparent way, I abided by Yin's (2014) suggestions about the desired attributes at the heart of any good qualitative study:

- *Ask good questions* – and interpret answers fairly
- Be a good "*listener*" not trapped by existing ideologies or preconceptions
- Stay *adaptive*, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities, not threats
- Have a *firm grasp of the issues being studied*, even when in exploratory mode
- *Avoid biases* by being sensitive to contrary evidence, also knowing how to *conduct research ethically*. (Yin, 2014, p. 73)

The primary method of data collection in my study was face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Seidman (2006) suggested the practice of recording interviews. A recording device was used in an effort to accurately report the data obtained from the interview. In addition to a recording device, I also took field notes while conducting interviews. Transcription of the audio

was completed on my password-protected home computer and tablet device. I transcribed all aspects of my interviews, as opposed to just the parts that were pertinent to my eventual findings (Seidman, 2006). Hard copies of the interview transcription and the audio recorder have remained under lock and key, thus ensuring that only the researcher has access to the materials (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Multiple sources of information as a result of multiple interviews among participants, as well as Iowa Workforce Development personnel, served to increase the credibility of the study by limiting my reliance on a single method of data collection (Anfara et al., 2002).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing part of the research process in this study, a practice that was in line with recommendations by both Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009). Conducting data analysis as the research took place provided me with the opportunity to test my understanding of the data with other participants and allowed for the opportunity to create meaningful findings from the data (Merriam, 2009). By conducting this analysis while the research was ongoing, I was able to zero in on certain themes that start to develop early on in the analysis process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The data produced by nine participants had the capacity to become unwieldy. In an effort to manage the data, I transcribed each interview in its entirety before agreeing to meet with the next participant in my study. Upon transcription, I read the transcript and sought out opportunities for reflection. Memoing on the transcript and jotting down hunches about the data also provided a useful tool for me as I conducted my analysis (Merriam, 2009).

As I made meaning of the data, I developed initial codes that provided structure to the data. After completing the first reading of the transcripts, I then compared the codes across

transcripts in an effort to find similarities in the data. This process closely followed the data spiral (Creswell, 2013) whereby researchers go back and forth between the data and potential findings until categories emerged from the data. In addition, the data spiraling process helped me to increase the dependability of a study (Anfara et al., 2002).

Ethical Considerations

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that qualitative researchers should avoid making participants feel coerced into participation. To ensure the comfort of my participants, I asked them to name a location that would best suited their interests.

In qualitative research, there is an onus on the researcher to protect participants (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). I carried out this tenant of ethical research in a variety of ways. First, I used pseudonyms in place of the participant's real names, both in the transcript, as well as in the write-up. In addition, the data itself has only accessible by me, as the computerized data has been kept behind a password-protected computer, and the recording device and paper copies of transcripts have been kept in a filing cabinet in my home.

Credibility

In an effort to increase the credibility of my study, I triangulated the data (Anfara et al., 2002; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009) by comparing transcripts from individual interviews and comparing those responses against interview data from Iowa Workforce Development. Furthermore, to ensure the accuracy of my data, transcripts of each interview were sent to the participants for their comment. If upon review of the transcript, a participant felt misrepresented, or felt that he or she misspoke about an issue, I removed the objectionable text from the transcript, thus disqualifying it from analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Member checks have been considered the paramount way by which a researcher can avoid misinterpreting the words

of participants (Anfara et al., 2002; Merriam, 2009). Member checks were also conducted throughout the process in an effort to enhance the credibility of my study (Merriam, 2009).

Transferability

This issue of transferability is one that has been difficult for qualitative researchers to grapple with (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). In accordance with Yin (2014) I would note that the purpose of my study was not to generalize to a larger population, but rather to generalize to the theoretical framework that undergirds the study. Instead of focusing on "statistical generalizations," my study focused on "analytic generalizations" that could be made from my research. To ensure that analytic generalizations can properly be made, Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative researchers make use of "rich, thick description" (p. 51) in an effort to allow other researchers to assess how the study in question might match another's own research. As stated earlier, I interviewed participants until I reached a point where saturation of the data had occurred (Johnson, 1997). Additionally, l included information such as the number of people in the study, their gender, age, former occupation, current occupation, as well as other contextual factors so that if a researcher were interested in producing a similar study, he or she would have access to as much of my study's information as was ethically possible.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that of time. Given that a minimum of five years have now passed for the participants, there was always the possibility that participants would not be able to recall the details from the time period. I tried account for the effects of memory loss through the use of multiple participants, as well as some archival documents where available. It cannot go unnoted that lapses in memory might be a confounding factor in my study.

Additionally, it was clear from the literature that periods of transition in a person's life can introduce significant hardships to the individual. One of the challenges of my study was that of asking participants to re-live parts of their life that could have been extremely taxing, either physically, emotionally, or mentally. Care and concern were needed as I conducted my interviews with the participants. While participants were informed of their rights ahead of the interviews, it remained incumbent upon me, as the researcher, to monitor my participant's emotions and monitor their nonverbal cues for greater insight into their thinking. If participants found that recalling memories from their displacement were too difficult, I would have to exclude that data from my study, thus limiting the credibility of the study. On one instance, I had a participant become emotionally upset and I asked if we should discontinue our interview. I reminded the participant that withdrawing from the study at anytime was always within the participant's prerogative. The participant said that continuing was the preferred choice. I asked if the participant was sure of that decision and the participant said yes. At that point, we resumed our interview.

An additional limitation of the study was that I did not spend a significant amount of time with the participants. Given that my interaction with participants lasted roughly one hour, there was always the chance that a participant would forget a detail that he or she may later wish to add. I conducted member checks as a way of stemming this possibility and I asked participants to review the transcript of their interview as a way of counteracting this possibility.

Generalization to the larger population is not a concern in my study, as the goal of my qualitative study was not to generalize to a population, but rather to generalize to theory (Yin, 2014). Ultimately, I wanted to provide readers with an in-depth understanding of how people, displaced after being in the workforce for many years, encountered the transition process of

returning to school, what factors were most influential in their decision-making process, as well as their perception of how returning to school impacted their lives. The themes developed by the study should, I hope, provide insight into a population that has been largely forgotten by many while also providing insight into how these people navigated one of the most difficult transition processes that one could face.

Statement of Reflexivity

Reflexivity in qualitative research is imperative (Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2006). Smith (citing Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) stated, "how authors represent themselves in the text [is] a way of increasing the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research (p. 209). Additionally, Creswell (2013) argued that researchers account both for their personal experiences with the phenomenon, as well as how their experiences might influence their findings. By forthrightly acknowledging my own experiences, I have tried to suspend my own understandings of the phenomenon and experience the phenomenon through the eyes of my participants. I introduce both my personal experience with the phenomenon, as well as how those experiences have shaped my views.

My Experiences with the Phenomenon

I have never been a displaced worker, nor do I have direct contact with anyone who has been displaced. My interest in displaced workers stems largely from watching a large manufacturer close its doors in my hometown, in the years following my high school graduation. As a result of my own lack of first hand knowledge with the topic, I admit that I imagined displacement to be an utterly dire experience, from which it was difficult to move forward. I know that this may not be the case for every individual, but I have acknowledged that I have a negative bias of what it means to become displaced, ahead of the study.

In addition, while I have experienced transitions in my own life, many of the transitions that I have experienced, even those that might be considered "major" have all been anticipated transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). My own experience with unexpected transitions is minimal and it completely non-existent in the realm of my occupation. I also do not know what it means to transition back into school after having been out for a period of time. I was a "traditional" aged student in college, going to college immediately after high school, therefore I do not know what transition means for a non-traditional student. Furthermore, given my status as a traditional college student, I never had the experience of having not earned a college credential for a period of time, then later earning a college credential, thus, I do not have an understanding of the impact that earning a college credential has on person.

How My Experiences Have Shaped My Views

Given that I have no personal experience with displacement, I admit that I have only perceived worker displacement in a negative light. In addition, I have no experience with what it means to return to school. I only know that people suggest that it is difficult to make the return and I suspect that I have internalized that notion. Collectively, I see displaced workers as having suffered a double whammy: first, their displacement, and second, their general desire to avoid returning to school for fear of the difficulty that might be associated with school as an institution.

I was not living in this town at the time of the manufacturer's closing, but my family and my wife's family lived in town and when we went there – which was essentially every weekend – I saw what I understood to be the effects of displacement. Houses around town had been abandoned, shops on the town square had closed, grocers left the area as demand for goods decreased. I associated the entire economic decline of the town with the closing of the manufacturer. Perhaps all of the blame ought not lie on the manufacturer, as it is certainly the

case that the entire economy was doing poorly at the time. I still, however, feel that closure of the plant did irreparable harm to a town that looks very different than it did just ten years ago.

CHAPTER IV.

FINDINGS

Overview

In this chapter, I present the findings of my case study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the process through which displaced workers make their decision to transition back to school through Schlossberg's Model of Transitions, as well as to investigate the impact that returning to school had on participants' lives. My study was guided by three research questions:

1) How does a displaced worker arrive at the decision to enroll in and complete a degree or certificate program?
2) What factors influence a displaced worker's decision to return to school?
3) How has the completion of a college degree, or certificate program impacted a displaced worker's life?

Interviews were employed as the primary method of data collection. Field notes, as well as observation of participants during the interview process, also supplemented the data collection process. Additionally, I met with Iowa Workforce Development personnel in an effort to help triangulate data that I received from the participants in this study. Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions provided the theoretical framework of the case study. As noted earlier, transitions represent "turning points… or a period between two periods of stability" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 30). In this light, displacement can be seen as a turning point. In addition, Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions (Anderson, 2012), which focuses on *situation, support, self,* as well as *strategies*, was useful in helping me craft interview questions that truly helped me understand the decision-making process that workers encountered as they faced displacement.

In this chapter, I discuss my findings of this study. I begin by providing a detailed account of the context in which my study took place. I then introduce each of the participants of this study. Finally, I discuss the themes that surfaced in this study, within the context of my research questions and Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions.

Putting My Research Site in Context

It's hard to understate the impact this employer had on the town. The company and the town grew up together, with the population of the town exploding in the 1920s. Much of the town still echoes with the memories of a bygone era. Older homes that executives in the company once called home are now tired houses, many of which are in need of a fresh coat of paint, a new sidewalk in front of the house – as the old cobblestone sidewalks have deteriorated to the point that their safety was circumspect at best – and a myriad of other general repairs.

A stroll through the town reinforces other aspects that made the town and the company one in the same. A number of city-owned properties are labeled with the name of the company. Items made by the company sit in front of houses, repurposed and now used as decretive art, or planters, or perhaps something else that I was unable to recognize. The school district had its central administration in one of the homes owned by the company's namesake. Perhaps nothing demonstrates the connection that the company had to the town like the library. The library, a beacon of democratic values, a place that enshrines the importance of the common man, has been adorned with an unmistakable red roof, the color both stands out when you look at the building, while also reminding you of the company's iconic red logo that affixed itself to a building just blocks from the library's location.

The company has gone, though the town remains. Remnants of the past remain ever present. The massive citadel that was the company's headquarters sits vacant and lonely amidst

the center of town. The structure would look even more imposing today, had a portion of the factory not been torn down years ago. To the North of town, another sprawling complex of buildings sits occupied by new tenants, though the hustle and bustle of the factory seems scarce when compared to fifteen years ago. Today, the town's population has remained largely unchanged, though the composition of the community is certainly different. Today, "white collar" workers are less present. Middle managers who were a staple of the corporate office complex are gone. It was in this context that I sat down with former workers of the company to discuss how they decided to return to school and contemplate the impact of that education on their lives.

Participant Profiles

Hank

Hank was a tall slender man in his late forties. We agreed to meet outside of the town in which Hank lived. In a coffee shop, Hank shared the story of his 18 years with the company. To hear Hank tell it, he genuinely seemed to enjoy his work, stating that; "I liked working for Bullseye (pseudonym). I am one of the people that really enjoyed working there. I loved it. And for what it's worth, I would've retired from there…" He started on the assembly line at 22, working there until he was 40. At the time of displacement, Hank was both worked on the assembly line, while also performing other people's jobs when they were out sick, otherwise known as a "utility."

Today, putting his educational certificates to good use, Hank ran a small business that sells uniforms. When Hank talked about his new job after Bullseye, there was a sense of excitement that he exudes, and with good reason. Working from home, Hank had the flexibility and autonomy that weren't available to him at Bullseye. As Hank described it, "Bullseye was

much harder, you know, I worked on a line and I was more of a robotic type person there… Now, now I have to use my mind, I have to think, because I do it all." Hank, despite enjoying working at Bullseye, had moved on and successfully found work in an entirely new field.

Ron

Ron and I met in the epicenter where the displacement event occurred. Silvery-haired and tall, Ron seemed excited to tell his story of his 26 years at Bullseye. Amongst the participants in this study, Ron had the greatest number of years of service with the company. At 26 years of service, Ron was the closest to the typical "30-and-out" plan that many who worked for Bullseye had come to expect. At the time of our discussion, had Bullseye still been in business, Ron would have been retired in September of 2014. As it stands, Ron works as a nurse today.

With his "30-and-out" plan disrupted by displacement, Ron went back to school to become a nurse. The decision to get into nursing was driven by age, "I didn't want to have to try to start all over again and manufacturing because it was physically, such a toll." Despite having to put retirement on hold, when asked about advice that he'd give to other workers, Ron was encouraging and adamant about the hard work that would be necessary, stating, "you can't be lazy, you have to be highly dedicated, you have to be motivated to do it."

Susan

Susan and I met at her house on a chilly January evening. The frigid wind whipped as I drove to her home for our interview. Susan invited me into her living room where we spent the next 60 minutes discussing her work with Bullseye, and her subsequent return to school. Susan was in her mid-forties.

Susan currently commutes 45-50 minutes to work, each way. The 1.5-hour round-trip commute is certainly a far cry from her commute of four minutes. Susan's rationale for driving to a metropolitan area to work was pretty simple, economics. Susan noted that, "…even with a two year associates degree, if you look for a job here in Centralia…they just don't pay what the metro pays…you just can't find anything in this area." Prevailing wages in Centralia make it likely that Susan will continue to commute, putting an ever-increasing number of miles on her 2009 Jeep, which already has 165,000 and as she described it, "is worth nothing."

Margo

Margo and I met in Centralia on a snowy afternoon in January. Fifty-six and petite, Margo recounted her time on the line, slinging 40 pound appliance components as part of her day-to-day job. As the snow fell fiercely outside, Margo warmly told me about her experiences at Bullseye, her preparation to enter into her nursing program, as well as her experiences while in the program.

Margo's experience demonstrated just how hard it could be to go through a role change. Interestingly, the decision to become a student wasn't hard for her, but rather for those around her. As she vividly recalled, her co-workers asked her all kinds of questions upon her decision to return to school, questions like, "What do you want to go back to school for? Why would you want to go back to school? It's too stressful it's too much time and energy, then you can't guarantee a job after that!" Margo explained that many of her co-workers had known her for a long time and had made judgments about her based on their previous experiences with her, but Margo remained undeterred, as she noted, "I don't know that they had the faith that we were smart enough to go back to school… but their discouragement made me a little bit more determined to show them that I could; I *can* do this."

Angie

We sat down for a conversation at Angie's house. Angie, who lives on the outskirts of Centralia, resides in an imposing two-story farmhouse that sits stoically on the curve of a county blacktop road. I arrived just as the pizza cooker was going on the fritz; she exclaimed that the pizza cooker was a necessity, as the oven in this old house struggled to cook much of anything. She warned her son that the pizza would likely take an hour to cook, given that they were relying on the oven.

At age 52, Angie was also petite woman. A part-time nurse in the area, Angie experienced a number of changes around the time of her displacement. Her oldest child was preparing to leave the house and go to college. Angie and her husband divorced around this time as well, money was tight and the resultant austerity took its toll. Her part-time status with her current employer was largely due to custody issues regarding her younger child, a son. As Angie described,

> I chose to work part time so that I could be home for my son. When I first started in nursing I work 2 to 10 p.m. I was there every night, and I was missing out on a lot. That was one of the things that my former husband complained about in our divorce. He said that I wasn't available for our son so I decided that I would stay part time.

Cassandra

I met Cassandra at a coffee shop in Centralia. We had a wonderful discussion in a little nook of the shop, where two people could get to know one another without too great a disturbance from other patrons. Among the participants, Cassandra chose to go back to school to "learn how to farm," as she put it. As we explored her decision to go back to school, it became clear to me that she wasn't just a farmer, but was more of a jack-of-all-trades, doing a number of

different things related to farming. Such diversity wasn't new to Cassandra however, she had been a "utility" at Bullseye prior to in closing, thus Cassandra really took on the same role in her life after Bullseye, albeit in a different setting.

Having spent 13 years at Bullseye, its closure led down a new path, "I needed to do something else with my life, I did not want to go back into a factory." As she noted, "I've always felt a strong connection to the land, so I wanted to go back to school and learn to be a farmer, basically." Now 50, Cassandra works the field in which she majored, managing a farm in the central Iowa area. Perhaps most memorable in our discussion with one another was Cassandra's response to the stress that might have been caused by the closing of Bullseye. She simply said, "I think that what you go through makes you who you are, and you have a choice when you go through a stressor. You can either become a victim of it or you can be victorious over it…" Her straightforwardness and pithy responses made Cassandra a delight to learn from.

Lisa

Lisa and I met at a local restaurant. It was there that Lisa kindly shared with me why she just about didn't go back to school, how she made the decision to return to school, as well as why she was no longer in the field that she had studied. Lisa's experience was unique amongst the participants in that she was the only person interviewed who had not remained employed in her chosen field of study. Instead, Lisa arrived at the decision to return to a factory and continue working when she felt that the job prospects in the area were too slim.

Despite her decision to return to a factory setting, Lisa never blamed her teachers, or the college that she attended. In fact, Lisa was one of the biggest supporters of returning to school. Instead, Lisa discussed how she came out of school in 2008, just and the economy was in a deep recession and how the realities of the local job market simply did not lend itself to employment

in the telecommunications field. As we wrapped up our interview, I asked her if she had any advice for displaced workers who were contemplating a return to school, given that she was no longer in the field, I was particularly interested in her answer. Her answer really spoke to the power of schooling, "if [a displaced worker] had any idea of something that [he or she] really, really wanted to do, it would be worth pursuing it. It broadens your horizons, I don't know, you'll feel alive…"

Janice

Like Lisa, Janice also offered a somewhat unique perspective on displacement and returning to school. Many of the participants in this study possessed either a GED, or high school diploma prior to displacement. Janice, however, had an associate degree and when she became displaced, went on to get her bachelors degree.

Today, Janice was 52 and has found a new career working for a large employer in the state of Iowa. When she talked about her transition process, a sense of thankfulness kept reappearing. Along with the thankful feelings that she exuded, Janice reminded me of just how impactful the process of displacement can be. Janice commented during our discussion that there were times when it was not easy to discuss all of her feelings. Though difficult, Janice remained upbeat through our discussion and was really excited to discuss her experiences in school. Janice said that there was no real question as to whether or not to return to school, as she said, "It was such an incredible opportunity, how could [I] ever pass that up?"

Devon

At 57, Devon was the most senior participant of the study. We met at a local restaurant and talked well past our 60-minute self-imposed time limit. Devon was all too happy to continue to share and had told me that I'd likely end up with too much information from him. For an hour

and a half, we shared a booth while he enlightened me with stories about working at Bullseye, learning about his displacement and how he decided to get into communications.

Eclectic was the best way to describe Devon. In perhaps one of the most memorable moments of our interview, he stated that, " Some people live to work, I work to live." True to this motto, Devon kept busy while working at Bullseye by playing Sudoku puzzles from time to time; he said that his mind wondered if he just focused on the activity at hand. He spoke of his playing in a band, as well as his interest in shooting a documentary about volunteer EMTs in the state of Iowa. Creativity kept coming up in our conversations and Devon clearly went back to school and earned a degree in an area that allowed him to better express that creative side.

Table 4.1 Participants in Study

Name***	Age	Number of years in factory prior to displacement	Level of education prior to displacement	Level of education after displacement	Area of study	Still in the field of study?
Hank	48	18	High School	Certificate(s)	E-commerce design Entrepreneurship	Yes
Ron	56	26	High School	Associate degree	Nursing	Yes
Susan	46	10	High School	Associate degree	Accounting	Yes
Margo	56	21	GED	Associate degree	Nursing	Yes
Angie	52	12	Associate degree	Associate degree plus LPN license	Nursing	Yes
Cassandra	50	13	GED	Associate degree	Entrepreneurial & Diversified Agriculture	Yes
Lisa	54	9	One year of college	Associate degree	Telecommunications	No
Janice	52	11	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree	Human Services & Psychology	Yes
Devon	57	20	High School	Associate Degree	Communications	Yes

***Names are pseudonyms

Themes from the Research

I identified five themes this study. The themes from this research study include:

1. Economic Survival
2. The Social Safety Net
3. Family and Faculty
4. The Changing Nature of Work
5. Personal Growth and Fulfillment

The themes from this study are discussed in the context of my research questions, as well as in the context of Schlossberg's 4S Model of transitions.

Theme #1: Economic Survival

Participants of this study indicated that manufacturing jobs were dying off in the area and that the wages the manufacturing sector provided were increasingly harder to come by. There was a need to find something different to pay the bills, to "stop the skid" and maintain a standard of living, this "need to survive" helped participants make the decision to return to school.

Sum et al., (2011) suggested that displacement can lead to difficulty in matching worker skills with existing jobs and, when that occurs, problems of mal-employment arise. Researchers have noted the deleterious effects that displacement can have on individuals in areas that are economically stressed (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Knapp & Harms, 2002). Occupational *skidding* is a function of, "A decline in job status, pay or benefit reductions, or lower levels of work satisfaction upon reemployment" (Knapp & Harms, 2002, p. 616). In essence, people settle for any work that is available, as opposed to finding a new job that is best suited to their interests and skill level. The fear of a

"skid" was certainly a motivating factor that pushed participants to find problem-based solutions to their displacement and not dwell on the emotional issues surrounding displacement. Participant's attempts to control the "skid" seem to largely have resulted from a fear that prevailing wages in the area were too low to accept, given the wage that had been experienced at Bullseye.

For example, Angie said that her return to school was, in part, motivated by money. As Angie said:

> I knew that I wouldn't be able to find a job anywhere else that would pay as well as Bullseye. I knew that in order to move on and be able to make a good wage, but I had to go back to school.

Angie avoided an "occupational skid" by returning to school and getting her nursing degree. I asked her to comment on what factors influenced her decision to return to school. She said:

> Well, I've always actually wanted to be a nurse and that's what I actually wanted to be when I got out of high school. I went to school to be a nurse initially, but then I found out you had to dissect a cat. I was like, "I'm not going to do that." But, I've always liked helping people so, the fact that I knew that I would be helping people… pause... Plus, I have kids to take care of. I had to make a decent wage to take care of my kids.

The theme of survival also was apparent when Susan provided a vivid account of why a return to school was so important, as well as how she was able to control her situation by choosing where she worked. Susan observed:

> There are lots of places in Bonnesburg that will pay reasonably well but here in Centralia, I mean, $13 an hour or $13.50 an hour, you're pretty darn lucky… people have families, people have children, and even with two of you making $13 an hour, It's tough to make ends meet. So, there is just nothing around here… right now I'm making, $18 an hour or $19 an hour [working in Bonnesburg], close to what I was making at Bullseye.

The return to school allowed her to compete for jobs in the Bonnesburg metropolitan area. Susan noted, "I had to go back to school and get my degree and start making decent money again and carry on." Working in Centralia would have yielded a paycheck that would not have allowed her to stay in her home and continue to live a lifestyle that was acceptable to her. Sales' (1995) argues that changing business climates lead to big changes for workers, "Change is most apparent in areas of the country with shrinking populations and dying industries… in these communities, being laid off or fired often triggers a downward economic spiral that may be irreversible because of structural changes in the workforce" (p. 483). In this respect, ability to shape how she understood her new job appeared to give Susan a sense of control over what had happened to her, in her work life.

Ron was the most senior individual, both from an age and work experience perspective, which was interviewed in this study. As the individual with the longest work history with Bullseye, as well as his leadership role within the plant, Ron said that those factors placed him, "at the top end of the wage earners at the plant at the time. I had worked my way almost to the very top." Literature (Jacobson, LaLonde, & Sullivan, 1993) would suggest that Ron was likely to experience significant occupational skidding.

True to the literature, Ron did. I had asked Ron about his financial situation post-displacement. Ron stated, "I will just put it this way, put bluntly seven years ago I was making six dollars more an hour than I am right now."

The wage loss was in line with the literature. I did the math real quick and discovered that at six dollars an hour, Ron was likely earning $12,000 less, per annum.

I commented, "Ron, that's about a $1,000 per month."

What Ron said next was surprising to me. He looked at me for a minute then said, "I still feel like I've achieved because it could've been so much worse." Like Susan, Ron appeared to control how he understood what had happened to him. His frame of mind allowed him to see himself as one who had come out on top and survived. As he stated:

> When I actually look back on it and look at what I achieved I can look back on it, you know, and be proud of it because a lot of people floundered. You know, I look back on it and I was able to rise above it.

Economic survival wasn't merely a matter of finding a new job with a similar wage. Cassandra, who worked part time, said that her pay was an adjustment, but not too hard of one. The fact that Cassandra and her husband had taken a number of proactive measures to cut their expenses clearly factored into such a comment. The hardest adjustment was to the change in health insurance, an adjustment that was complicated by health issues that had developed. As Cassandra said:

> I could've been added to my husband's policy, but it was cheaper for me to buy my own out right. Now, it would not of been a big deal had I not been diagnosed as diabetic in May. Because what I did was, I bought the policy late last year

> when I was supposed to. But then, in May I was diagnosed as diabetic, but when I bought the policy I wasn't diagnosed. I took the policy with a nice high deductible. I thought, "Let's keep the cash flow coming in…" So now, my deductible is clear up here and my medical supplies are really close, but not enough... So, that's had more impact. I miss the insurance. I do, I miss having good insurance.

Evident in the passage, the necessity of "economic survival" led to a decision-making process that "kept the cash coming in," however it came at a cost. When other major life events, such as a chronic disease, impacted the family, economic survival became tenuous.

Only one participant in this study reported earning greater pay in their new occupation, this nearly seven years after the fact. Otherwise, the remaining participants were paid less in their new occupation. Such a finding was in line with what other researchers (Hipple, 1999; Jacobson et al., 1993b, 2011; Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003 Knapp & Harms 2002, & Ruhm, 1991) have found in previous studies. Despite decreased pay and benefits, participants saw their return to school as an important bulwark, preventing a further skid down the socioeconomic ladder.

Anderson et al. (2012) argued that even when transitions are involuntary, how a person perceives their efficacy over the transition could allow for a much more successful transition process. The transition that participants experienced in this study would most appropriately be considered an involuntary transition. Participants in this study attempted to control their *situation*, a component of the Schlossberg 4S Model, by actively seeking new opportunities when they were foisted into transition. Furthermore, by employing

"problem-based" coping *strategies*, an additional component of the Schlossberg 4S Model, in an effort to ameliorate their impending wage reductions.

Theme #2: The Social Safety Net

Anderson et al. (2012) suggested that four essential sources of support exist during any transition. The first source, *intimate relationships*, are relationships are centered on, "trust, support, understanding, and the sharing of confidences" (Anderson et al., 2012 citing Lowenthal & Weiss, 1976). The second type of support, the *family unit*, has been the focus of sociologists (Anderson et al., 2012). Families may possess the resources to make a transition easier, and by contrast, more difficult where resources are lacking, or do not exist. The third type of support, *networks of friends*, (Anderson et al., 2012) can often prove important to the displaced worker, as they provide an important source for social support during a major life changing event. The *institutions and communities* to which people belong compose the last source of support during a transition (Anderson et al., 2012). This study demonstrated the acute importance that participants placed on *Institutional Supports,* specifically the Federal Government.

The Federal government has developed a number of programs to help those who experience displacement (Kletzer & Rosen, 2005). Sales (1995) argued that scholars have generally ignored the importance of Federal government programs. In her own research, she found that unemployment benefits were the key economic resource that a plurality of households relied on in order to subsist (Sales, 1995). This study seems to lend support to the importance of the Federal government's programming for displaced workers. Had NAFTA-TAA benefits, or unemployment insurance not been available, the majority of participants in this study would not have returned to school. Furthermore, it

was the combination of both programs, not just NAFTA-TAA benefits that made returning to school a true possibility.

NAFTA-TAA. Perhaps most interesting in this aspect of the study was the wide-spread importance placed on institutional supports – chief among those, the North American Free Trade Agreement – Trade Adjustment Assistance program (NAFTA-TAA, or TAA). Every participant indicated the importance of NAFTA-TAA's education benefits as a major factor in their decision to return to school. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) helps to provide workers with cash payments, beyond Unemployment Insurance; in order to train for a new job, mileage compensation to and from school, as well as other additional benefits (O'Leary, 2010). Typically, two years of income support were available to displaced workers (O'Leary, 2010).

I asked participants to describe the events that led them to return to school. Participant responses varied, but there was striking commonality:

- *The thing that pushed me to do it was when I found out that there was an opportunity to do a trade program or something like that. We didn't know exactly what it was at the time - for free education - and I didn't want to pass up on that. That was why I decided to go to school. – Ron*
- *…and then NAFTA, because they classified it as moving our job to another country, paid for our schooling. – Hank*
- *…when I saw free schooling, it was a must take advantage of. – Margo*
- *The schooling would be paid for, through grants, and it was kind of a no-brainer to go back to school, since it was paid for! – Cassandra*
- *Jobs were scarce around here, so, I thought, what the heck it's going to be paid for so I might as well go to school. – Lisa*
- *You know, the fact that, honestly, that it was paid for and that we were getting unemployment… I mean for me to go to school full-time and to work full-time… (pause) You know, that just wouldn't have happened…*

there was free school so you had to go back to school and get your degree and start making decent money again and carry on… – Susan

The allure of free school was simply too good to pass up. While schooling was an attractive option, the decision was not easy. All of the participants noted that schooling was not easy in their younger years. The recollection of school as a particular challenge made the decision to return more complicated.

Many participants also noted that the restrictions of the program became a significant motivating factor in their decision to stick with retraining, despite external events that may have otherwise affected their decision-making process.

For example, when I asked Lisa, "What motivated you to complete your program of study?"

Lisa responded with a laugh, "Well, because I knew I had to."

"Why?" I inquired.

"Just because of funding and everything," Lisa said.

"I knew that if I didn't finish it, I would probably have to pay it back so…" Lisa trailed off.

Cassandra had a similar response to the same question. As she put it, "To be quite honest, I didn't want to have to pay them back. If you didn't complete the degree, you had to pay it back. And I didn't want to do that. I was too busy saving money..." Hank gave a similar response, chuckling as he said; "I had to complete it in order for it to be paid for!"

In my conversations with Angie, I had asked Angie about her experiences returning to school and a part of her answer also spoke to the strings of the TAA

program. She said that she took her education more seriously the second time around. When I asked her, "Why?" As Angie laughed a bit, she said:

> When I first went to college, my mom and dad paid for it. You know, when I was going through the TAA fund, it was, "You either make it or you break it." If you failed you lost your funding. When you're a kid, you don't really think about the seriousness of it, or your future that much. But, when you're an adult, you already know what your future is.

It was interesting to see how the "high-stakes" nature of the program really put people into a crucible where success was, as they saw it, the only legitimate option. As Angie alluded, the program completion requirements really seemed to focus the mind in a way that other things simply could not.

Unemployment benefits. NAFTA – TAA benefits were just one important part of the safety net. Unemployment benefits were another piece of the safety net that participants considered a "key piece of the puzzle" as they made the decision to return to school. As demonstrated in the quote above, Susan painted a very sincere picture of just how close to the financial and emotional edge participants felt as they experienced displacement. The decision to go to school likely would not have happened *at all* had it not been for *both* TAA education benefits *as well as* unemployment benefits.

When I asked Ron and Margo to consider those supports that were critical to their success as they made the decision to return to school. In Ron and Margo's cases, each mentioned that unemployment benefits were crucial. Margo said that, "Having the schooling paid for while we were drawing unemployment for that time made things easier. Ron continued, "You know, the school was paid for but we still had to make the

house payment. We still had to pay the utilities. Even then, unemployment didn't quite get it all."

Susan commented that unemployment benefits were the lynchpin in her ability to successfully transition into a new career. As she described it:

> You know, the fact that, honestly, that it [schooling] was paid for and that we were getting unemployment… the fact that we got unemployment… like I said, I was trying to get done as quickly as possible because, while I don't remember unemployment being bad, it wasn't great. But, if they had not offered the unemployment, it sounds terrible but if they just said, okay, we will pay for your school, I probably would not have went back. I probably would have had to find another good paying job. Then, I would not have been able to go to school after working full-time.

Janice made a similar assessment, as she described:

> I was careful not to work too much, I was careful to only work so many hours, or else my unemployment benefits would get cut. And that suited me just fine. I am glad that I had that job though.

Previous research (Walker, 2012) has suggested that applicants for Federal government programs struggle with the enrollment process. When I asked participants about some of the struggles that the faced throughout the displacement process, answers varied widely. I asked a second probing question related to the paperwork requirements.

When I asked Cassandra, "Did you find difficult about your coursework, or difficult about the enrollment process?"

Cassandra responded promptly, saying:

None at all, it was an incredibly smooth process. You had to do a lot of paperwork. But once I got in school, it was a piece of cake. It was easy.

I found her answer surprising given the research to the contrary (Walker, 2012). I asked other participants. Hank was particularly prepared, so I asked him if he had a similarly smooth process as he completed TAA paperwork to get into school. Hank said, " [I] was all planned ahead and all of the paperwork was done." I pushed Hank to explain the process, as he experienced it, further.

Hank articulated:

Basically... They hired some people to help us, deal with us [Bullseye workers]. I just went up there, and they already had an idea of what we were going to do… I don't recall it being difficult, or anything like that. They had people in place to help us and to tell us what to do.

Angie simply said that she experienced "no problems" related to enrollment. Like Angie, Devon said nothing about paperwork difficulties related to the program. Similarly, Susan said that she didn't have problems related to the bureaucracy of the program, but that there certainly was a lot of paperwork. As Susan described:

I don't feel like I was given the runaround on the paperwork. I thought that I had plenty of support. I remember there being lots of paperwork. It kind of felt like, "Geez, am I signing away my firstborn kid?" But, in reality, these were agreements and if you didn't keep a particular grade point average, you had to pay the school back and you're going to get dropped out of the class… if your grade point average goes below a 2.5. I remember there being lots of paperwork and I remember everyone there being... Yeah, there was plenty of help and plenty of

support.

Margo echoed Susan's comments stating:

> There was so much paperwork and there was so much stuff you had to go through to get everything in place, every month... Just all the paperwork and everything we had to do, it was a lot of work. It was worth it at the end. It was worth it in the long run.

Again, the findings of this study suggest that the experience of Bullseye workers was much better than the experience that others have had (Walker, 2012). One might be critical, suggesting that participants' ultimate success likely colored their view of the process. Certainly such a critique would be valid, however, all participants suggested a relative amount of ease in navigating the process. Given the ubiquity of the responses, it seems more than coincidental; participants of this study had a smoother experience navigating the TAA paperwork than participants of other studies, most notably Walker, 2012. Positive assessments of participant TAA experience may also have been facilitated by the fact that program advisors and facilitators were better-trained and better able to address questions than the facilitators in the Walker (2012) study.

Schlossberg's 4S Model of transitions is, in part, defined by *supports*. While supports vary among a large number of potential resources, this study clearly demonstrated the importance of institutional supports in the displacement process. In fact, so important were Federal government programs in the transition process of the participants of this study, that consideration of Federal institutional supports is warranted as its own concept in future studies that examine the transition processes that displaced workers face.

Theme #3: Family and Faculty

Family. Research suggests that familial support is critical to the success of displace workers (Chen & Lim, 2012; Mazerolle & Singh, 2002; McAtee & Benshoff, 2006; Rocha & Strand, 2004). This study lends support to the positive role that family members play in helping individuals to return to school. Six of the nine participants suggested that family members played a positive role in helping them make the decision to return to school, while only one participant suggested that family members reacted negatively to their decision to return to school. The other two participants suggested that family members were neither positive, nor negative in their response to participant's return to school.

I asked Cassandra who, if anyone, had an impact on her decision to return to school. She twisted in her chair a bit then said:

> My husband… he's always been very supportive and encouraging. He made me go back to get my GED, I never would have done it had he not encouraged me to do it. He calls it encouragement…I call it pushing.

Today, her decision to go back to school has led to "synergy" with her husband. As she described it, "Our career paths meshed together very nicely. I grow the food, and he fixes the tractor when I break it."

Janice also commented that family was a major factor in her decision to return to school, stating that her teenaged daughter was the driving factor. Janice commented:

> I think it was just really important for me to show her that at 43, it doesn't matter what your age you're at; you can do anything you want. Getting my degree was

really important as well, because it wasn't as important to my parents. So, I wanted it to be different for my daughter.

Similar to Janice, Devon discussed the importance of his father on his decision to return, stating, "My dad was in his 70s at the time [Devon was displaced]. He was still taking classes… He was always known for having something to say and he was always so supportive of anything that I wanted to do."

Susan also articulated the importance of family in her decision to return to school. "My mom was supportive and my son was supportive, and so it was just like… It just made sense," said Susan.

In one case, both Ron and Margo noted that Ron's sister had encouraged Ron to avoid nursing. Ron's sister was an RN and as Ron recalled, "I think she had seen a number of things in the ER and didn't want me to be exposed to those sights." However, his sister's advice came from a place of caring and concern for her brother. That "advice" coupled with a good friend had actually convinced him that nursing was in fact the right profession for him, post-Bullseye. The influence of family was crucial component in participants' decisions to return to school, though faculty and personnel at the collegiate level played an equally, if not more, significant role in participants' decision to return to school.

Community college personnel. Participants made it very clear that their initial contacts with community college personnel mattered a great deal as it related to their decision to return to school. In some cases, initial contact with community college personnel went very smoothly and participants glowed as they recounted their

experiences. In other instances, initial contact with personnel nearly derailed the whole transitional process.

Ron recounted a particularly negative experience with personnel at Central Community College (CCC). He was preparing to enter into the nursing program at CCC and had the following recollection,

> I went to my first thing in nursing... There was this meeting that was mandatory and when I was in there, it was kind of shocking to me to see some rather rotund lady screaming at us, telling us that most of us wouldn't make it and to really decide if that's what we wanted to do. And that was not attractive at all! I almost said to hell with this at that point.
>
> "Huh?" I responded, somewhat taken back.
>
> Ron exclaimed, "Yeah, they only wanted the people that were going to be serious about it! I walked out of there feeling about 4 inches tall."

Margo, who also went to CCC to study nursing, echoed Ron's sentiment. "She said 50% of you would not pass!" Margo said that was the first thing that she remembered hearing at CCC. Margo further recounted the experience noting how the meeting had made her feel. She sarcastically said to herself, "Yeah! I feel so much better!" Ron and Margo's experience at CCC seemed to be a bit out of the ordinary, as every other participant had more positive interactions with personnel.

Importantly, Ron's comment, "I almost said to hell with this at that point," provides insight into just how important those initial contact people are, vis-à-vis a displaced worker's decision to return to school. Many of the participants in this study already lacked some confidence in their ability to complete school. Some had been poor

high school students, some had math skills that weren't up to par, and some feared the risk of failure, while others felt intimidated by schooling, especially early on in the process. Those people whose job it is to help people transition to the collegiate experience would be wise to recognize the potential influence that they have on others on potential matriculating students.

As previously indicated, initial contacts with personnel were typically described in a more positive light by other participants and further illuminate the need for positive initial contact between a post-secondary institution and the displaced worker. Whether by helping displaced workers enhance their knowledge (Owen & Fitch, 2003; Savickas, 2012), helping the displaced worker to better understand their own "evolving priorities throughout life" (Duys et al., 2008, p. 237), or by helping displaced workers work through narrative exercises (Davies, 1996), community college personnel play an important role in the lives of displaced workers.

In my talk with Lisa, I asked her to consider who had the greatest impact on her decision to return to school. Interestingly, I had expected a husband, or a child, or perhaps even her own intrinsic desire to drive her to return to school. I was wrong. She proceeded to discuss the importance of the community college personnel,

> I talked to one of the advisers at MCC and she kind of guided me toward a career path. I think the people at MCC just kind of persuaded me. I mean, not forcefully… They opened up opportunities to me, so...

Lisa also drew a tremendous amount of support from the community college personnel. She talked about how both she and her husband "Kind of did their own things," post-Bullseye. She didn't know exactly what she wanted to do. As she put it, "after I got laid

off I knew I had to do something. Jobs were scarce around here. I still didn't know what I wanted to be, but…"

Lisa's husband didn't necessarily have strong advice and in the absence of strong family support, or persuasion, the CCCs personnel filled that purpose. Regarding supports, I asked Lisa to talk to me about who was particularly helpful, she stated, "I sound like a spokesman for MCC. They were the ones who really helped me through everything."

I probed, hoping to get at the heart of exactly what made the people at MCC so important, but Lisa was insistent that it was simply a general attitude of the people there. I probed again, this time with greater scaffolding, anticipating that a more direct question might change Lisa's answer.

I was wrong.

I asked, "Was there anybody specifically that was encouraging? Anybody from Centralia? Or nearby?"

Lisa remained undeterred, "No, not really, it was more just talking to the MCC people in figuring stuff out with them. Like I said, they were very, very encouraging."

Margo also found community college personnel to be particularly important. I had asked Margo to think back to who was a source of support as she made her decision to return to school. Her response was short and straight-forward, but it encapsulated the importance of CCCs personnel, stating, "certainly the counselors at the school where a lot of support."

In a couple of cases, the relationships that developed between participants of this study, and the community college that they attended, became more than mere transient

relationship. Devon now works at CCC as a television production coordinator and programmer. Lightheartedly, Devon said of his boss, "I never see him, unless he's wanting to borrow equipment for me or… We hang out together, that's pretty much the only time I see him." Likewise, Cassandra found herself in the employ of her former community college. After completing her degree in entrepreneurial agriculture, she worked on a number of different farm jobs, but ended up returning to CCC to be their farm manager.

Faculty. Perhaps it is boilerplate to laud the efforts of teachers, but for participants of this study, teachers played a central role in keeping participants working toward completion of their program of study. Every single participant doted on the faculty under which they learned. While not every teacher was as spectacular as the next, it was abundantly clear that participants gravitated toward those teachers who were supportive of their efforts to return to school.

For many, the return to school meant a return to an institution in which the participant had not had much success the last time around. Devon exemplified the point:

> I had a fear that I wouldn't be able to do the schoolwork. I'm terrible at math. I can't do it at all. I didn't have algebra when I went to high school. In fact I kind of slipped through the cracks… I got into a class called general math, or something like that. And the teacher, the teacher was great.

Lisa also said that math classes were hard but "the teachers were so encouraging. There were things that I just totally could not understand, but they did not have a problem with that. They would just say, try this, do that…"

I pressed further, asking, "What was particularly challenging?"

Lisa ultimately noted that the lack of a teacher in the classroom was something that was particularly difficult to overcome. A bit confused, I asked her to explain. She had tried attending an on-line school upon displacement, but soon found that the mathematics courses delivered on line proved especially challenging. She described it this way:

> I would work on it [math], and work on it, and work on it, but I still didn't get it. When the tutor was there though, I thought to myself, "this makes a little bit more sense." What was really funny though was that when I went to MCC, I had to take basically an algebra class and it was just like… The teacher there… That's what that guy was trying to tell us!? This is so easy! It was like a light bulb went off once he started teaching. It was really weird.

Some participants felt that their relationships with teachers were benefited by their age. As has been previously discussed, life stage plays an important role in any transition (Anderson et al., 2012). Susan alluded to this point. I asked her about being a student again, she stated, “I think that the teachers felt that older students obviously took it way more serious then did some of the younger kids.”

Cassandra elaborated on the concept. We were discussing what it was like to return to school. Cassandra leaned forward with a palpable sense of excitement apparent on her face and said, “Oh, it was great! It felt good! It was better than working!” I asked her to talk about why she had been so excited to return to school. Cassandra responded:

> I think when you're young, you're just trying to grow up, you know? The adult learners – they are already grown up. They've already been there and done that, "let's do something different", you know? Maybe some people have regrets about,

> "maybe I should've paid more attention in school" or maybe it's just, "I spent 13 years at Bullseye doing the same old thing, so you know... "Drive four screws and turn a machine around..." "So let's do something different."

I found her response intriguing, so I asked her if there was anyone who really helped her to recognize that "doing something different" was for her. Her answer was an unabashed, "yes!"

> I just loved my advisor and professor that did most of my classes in the degree program, she was my age and we got along really well, she too farms. My classes were very small, sometimes I was the only one in the class so I did independent studies, because it's not conventional corn and soybeans and hog confinement agriculture that I learned…it was just awesome, I loved going to school.

Susan also demonstrated a proclivity to attending classes at a particular MCC campus and did whatever she could to avoid another specific campus. I was perplexed, so I asked the obvious question, "why was MCCs "A" campus better than its "B" campus?" It boiled down to her perceptions of the teachers. As Susan described, teachers at B campus were more understanding of the circumstances faced by those displaced by Bullseye. At "A" campus, there simply wasn't recognition of the fact that displaced workers were in a different place in their life, when compared to their more traditional-aged colleagues.

Theme three demonstrated the importance of *supports* by expanding beyond Federal government programs to address both familial support, as well as support from other institutional sources, specifically post-secondary faculty and personnel (Anderson et al., 2012). Antonucci et al., (2004) argued that convoys – people that surround a person

through any life challenge – play an important role in how an individual copes with a life event. Faculty and personnel at post-secondary institutions were undoubtedly critical parts of convoy that participants used in order to successfully transition both into school, as well as complete their degree or certificate programs.

Theme #4: The Changing Nature of Work

Participants of this study noted the dramatic ways in which the workforce had changed since their time in the employ of Bullseye. While changes in the workplace seem common, perhaps even expected, the requirement to alter individual behavior was a shock to many participants' systems, though typically in a positive way. The interpersonal nature of work and the increased level of the cognitive demands stood out as particularly important in the eyes of participants.

Participants noted the importance of needing to be better able to connect to other individuals. Such a distinction may not seem important to an outsider, but to people who had spent their lives working, in essence, alone but together, this represented a marked change from their past and was something that each participant discussed.

Margo noted that:

> It just makes me feel good to do what I do. At Bullseye, we built [an appliance], I tore it down, and I put it back together. I didn't feel like I was making a contribution I guess. Now, I feel like I'm making a little difference in someone else's life.

Similarly, when I asked Hank about how Bullseye was different from his online sales business, he immediately noted that he now has to respond to customers, something that he had never been responsible for at Bullseye. He also noted that much of his time now

was spent updating his website, in an effort to appeal to current and potential customers. Cassandra elaborated more fully, saying:

> There's more personal interaction in the new jobs. In the factory, you had your little space, and you set it up how you wanted it. You and the person who is opposite you if there was another shift, you got together and made sure that everyone was okay with the space. You didn't have a lot of interaction except during break times… now I'm back having to relearn how to do that interpersonal thing again.

Even though Cassandra discussed the feeling of working by, but not with, people, participants expressed a certain sense of libertarianism in their reflections of their current work environment. The libertarian attitude that participants seemed to identify was interesting to me.

Hank articulated the point this way:

> I do it all, I am customer service I am the CEO, I am the night shift janitor, I do it all. I mean, I have one employee, so… Basically, what I am doing now is I am maintaining the website, I am adding to it and I am taking stuff off of it depending on how models work.

While Hank is the "jack of all trades" in his small online business, he enjoyed the freedom of working independently, as he described it, he was able to be more flexible in his day-to-day life. He stated, "If I want to take two days off, I can take two days off. I couldn't do that [at Bullseye]. Now I can do whatever I want." Reinforcing the concept of a more libertarian work attitude, Hank mentioned that he enjoyed his business more

than he enjoyed working at Bullseye. When I asked him to elaborate, he said, "Because it is mine. I'm proud of it… and I get to do what I want."

Similarly, Lisa described, "Bullseye was structured. You went in and you knew exactly what you were going to do. You did it all day, every day. You knew exactly what was expected of you."

Can you discuss how your job is different today, I asked.

Lisa simply stated, "Every day is a different day. I mean you're never going to do the same thing. Sometimes I would consider it chaotic."

Devon, commenting on his work experiences, post-Bullseye, noted that, "I have to produce something that is a finished product. I have to start and finish the same product. I'm not just adding parts to somebody else's product. So, when something is done, I am responsible for the quality of the thing as a whole…" Gone were the days of simply adding a piece to a collective product. Now, Devon felt personally responsible for whatever product was produced and he seemed to embrace this sense of libertarianism. Devon makes less at his current place of employment but he works a 30 hour per week job and would not be considered full time, however, that did not bother Devon, as he stated, "What I'm doing now, nobody can come in and do exactly the same thing I'm doing. And that's worth a few dollars an hour to me."

Additionally, the workplace became more cognitively demanding. Susan, who works in an office-setting today, said, "It's definitely more mental than physical… it's a night and day difference." Ron, who became a nurse said, "Now I'm working with people now and it's so much deeper emotionally…" Likewise, Hank noted that his work in online sales, "now I have to use my mind." Cassandra, discussing the difference

between her current job and her job at Bullseye said, “Bullseye was… repetitive and you didn't have to really think about it. People say, ‘monkeys can do it.’ And, in reality yes, if you train them, they actually could. But now, I think more, I use my brain more.” I asked Devon to comment on how his work today differed from his work at Bullseye. He grinned, and then said, “I do a lot of sitting at a computer and editing today and it’s tiring. It's a different kind of tired. At one point I couldn't understand how people could say that they were working hard in the office all day. But now, I certainly get it.”

Angie also noted that the workplace had increased in its cognitive complexity. In discussing how Bullseye differed from her new career in nursing, she noted that working at Bullseye simply required a person to “punch the clock.” She knew what her job was, and there was little in the way of ambiguity regarding what she’d be doing on any given day. However, all of that changed with nursing, “You drive home and you think, oh crap, did I do this, did I do that…" Devon drove the point further, “The job I had at Bullseye, thousands of people to come in and do it. And, it would look exactly the same. What I'm doing now, nobody can come in and do exactly the same thing I'm doing.”

Theme #5: Personal Growth and Fulfillment

Transitions are typically marked by both positive and negative aspects (Anderson et al., 2012). Russell (2011) noted that it was much easier to assist job seekers who looked at the transition as an opportunity. One’s way of explaining the transition, or one’s “explanatory style” provides useful insight for understanding how one handles a transition (Seligman, 2002). Anderson et al. (2012) argued that explanatory style becomes a critical component of how one copes with a transition, with a negative explanatory style adversely affecting outcomes for individuals and positive explanatory

style contributing to a higher likelihood of a successful transition. It was evident in this study that nearly every participant had an explanatory style that lent itself toward an optimistic outlook on life, despite the setbacks that displacement presented. Such a finding is key as it supports previous research that those with an optimistic outlook tend to accomplish more, both in school, and in the workforce (Anderson et al., 2012).

Explanatory style encompasses a holistic approach to how participants experience displacement. Anderson et al. (2012) (citing Seligman, 2002) argued that, "The way a person thinks about an event or transition can explain how some people weather transitions without becoming depressed or giving up" (p. 79). Evidence of an optimistic explanatory style demonstrated itself in a number of ways.

Cassandra said, "I needed to do something else with my life." Her sentiment was echoed by a number of other participants. Implicit in this quote, as I understood it, was a sense that working for Bullseye left people wanting something more. What "more" meant was slightly different for each participant, but the important point was that many of the participants felt that they on to something better after displacement.

When I asked Susan what led her to return to school, she replied, "I didn't necessarily want to work in another factory." Similarly, I asked Angie why she decided to return to school. Her decision to return was a bit more complicated than some of the rest, as she had been laid off almost immediately after Bullseye's closure was announced. In being laid off so early, she was called back, in accordance with union rules, while she was in school. I inquired as to whether she considered returning to Bullseye. She said, "Yes, I could've went back, but it would have been a nowhere deal." Susan had a somewhat similar situation though she had already completed school by the time she

received the call. As she told it, “I'm pretty sure I had my degree and was at my current job and they called and said, “Your number has come up, to rehire you, are you interested? I said, No.” Susan further explained:

> You know, the thought goes through your mind at that time that the rehiring could be temporary, but they are going to keep so many people out there... I think there are still people actually at plant eight that do repair parts... And the thought goes through your mind, could I end up staying? But I turned it down.

Again, Angie and Susan’s stories both demonstrate a rejection of their former lives and a sense of looking forward. Clearly, the temptation to return was present. For both, the pay would have been better, the benefits would have been better, and for each, the commute would have been significantly shorter. However, both talked about Bullseye as an afterthought, something to be associated with a different life.

Devon, like the others also wanted to travel a different path, post displacement. When I asked Devon why he had decided to return to school, he simply said, “I just thought that there was so much more that I could do.”

I gave Devon a bit of grief about playing Sudoku at the factory – a topic that we had discussed earlier - and it elicited a an even deeper response:

> Yeah, I was bored. You know, there just comes a time when… You put a machine piece on the machine, and then it just goes down the line. All of a sudden, it's like there's another machine and it feels like you haven't done anything. So I wanted to do something that when I'm gone, that thing is still here.

Devon later said, “I didn’t feel like I could do any of the things that I wanted to do without going to school first...” I then asked Devon if going back to school were more

about credentialing, he adamantly said, “No, and even if nobody asked, it was still an internal thing.” Devon’s explanation provides insight into the fact that his job at Bullseye was certainly something that he had settled on, but when the chance for a better opportunity arose, he took it.

Additionally, participants saw their next career as a better fit with their personal interests. Cassandra made this point as she discussed why she entered farming:

> I've always had a close connection to food, I am an eater, I consider myself a foodie, I love to cook and of all the career choices there could be, people always have to eat. You know? That's the one thing you can't go without. So the way I figured it, if I was to make money doing something, I can always make money, selling food. It may not be a lot of money, but nonetheless, everybody's got to eat.

Not only was Cassandra doing something that she loved, it also worked well with her husband. The way Cassandra described it, he had a job that involved fixing machinery and she had a job that involved breaking it.

In addition, Cassandra had the ability to plan her own work schedule. Though she worked part time, “I have arranged my schedule so that I only work spring, summer, and fall and I have winters off,” her ability to control her schedule provided her with a sense of control that she had never had at Bullseye and it contributed to her sense of satisfaction, post-Bullseye.

Hank also commented on the fulfillment he garnered from his return to school. In going from a factory job where he was “punching the clock,” to owning his own business, Hank was able to work for himself, and not someone else. As Hank described it, his job was better because it allowed him the flexibility he desired, while also allowing

him the ability to be a better dad since he could be there for his children when they needed him. Flexibility and the ability to "be there" weren't options, in his mind, when he worked for Bullseye.

Ron and Margo, who had returned to school to study nursing, commented that nursing was a fast growing field with opportunities throughout the nation. Their reflections on the importance of nursing were a far cry from the factory work that had dominated their previous life. I asked Ron how nursing differed from his work at Bullseye and he said, "The difference is instead of working with the machine you're working with people now and it's so much deeper emotionally." The implication from Ron was that the emotional connections that he made with patients led to increased personal fulfillment. He was an essential component in the care of his patients.

Fulfillment was, at times, guided by participants' experience with displacement. Participants wanted to make sure that their next job provided a greater sense of job security. I asked Margo, "Why nursing?"

Margo succinctly replied, "I guess I didn't want to have the chance to be outsourced and downsized again. I wanted to go into something that I thought I would pretty much always have a job in." The body language that Margo displayed, a simple "throwing away" motion as she said, "outsourced and downsized" provided clear visual evidence of how she felt about her job at Bullseye. Nursing seemed to provide a way to avoid the "discarded" feeling that she felt upon leaving Bullseye.

Similar to the other participants, Susan made it known her return to school provided a boost in personal satisfaction. Regarding her new job, Susan said:

> It's definitely more mental than physical but, it's a night and day difference. There are times when I think about… The job that I have now, I am needed. If I call in sick it's like, "Oh, Susan isn't here!" And that's just the way it is, I am needed. At Bullseye, if you weren't there somebody else filled in your position until you got back.

Inherent in Susan's understanding of her new job was a sense of purpose, a sense that if she weren't there, the job wouldn't get done. She did not have the same feeling at Bullseye. The idea that someone else could just "fill in" for the time being really demonstrated how devalued she felt in her job at Bullseye.

Angie was the most critical of her position, stating:

> My job now, it is more mental stress. Now, you have to decide what your priorities are now whereas at Bullseye, you knew exactly what you had to get done and it was very structured. I love my job but it is so stressful. You work your butt off all day long. I would not want to do my job full-time.

In spite of her feelings about the politics of the workplace, as Angie reflected on how her new position compared to her experiences at Bullseye, she really demonstrated just how intrinsically satisfied she felt on the job, stating:

> I would definitely say that I am more of a leader now. I really wasn't so much of a leader because I was on subassembly and I pretty much worked on my own. Now, I have to lead others. One thing that I find difficult for me to do is to tell other people what to do. (Chuckles) I have grown in that area where, if I have to get so many blood pressures and I already have a ton of stuff to do, I don't have any problem telling someone else, "I need you to go get this done for me." That's what

> we're supposed to do. But when I first started, I did everything myself. I wouldn't expect anyone else to do anything for me.

Her development into a leader could only have happened outside of Bullseye and recognition of her growth on the job reinforced the sense of satisfaction that she experienced in her post-Bullseye employment.

Devon and I discussed his life and work post-Bullseye. When viewed in the narrow context of pay, Devon was certainly did not fare well. He works 30 hours per week, thereby not working a "full-time" job. The cold statistical evidence would suggest that Devon was much worse off. Despite working 30 hours, Devon was happy as it allows him time to pursue his passion for videography. As Devon talked about his new job, he came to life, sitting forward in the booth, and saying:

> I have to produce something that is a finished product. I have to start and finish the same product. I'm not just adding parts to somebody else's product. So, when something is done, I am responsible for the quality of the thing as a whole.

The autonomy that Devon derived from his new job really seemed to excite his sense of self and, more broadly, his satisfaction at work. Later he emphasized the point, stating:

> The job I did at Bullseye, thousands of people to come in and do it. And, it would look exactly the same. What I'm doing now, nobody can come in and do exactly the same thing I'm doing. And that's worth a few dollars an hour to me. I mean, I would happily give up a little bit, and I have, to get that.

Margo stated that, "I make less now, certainly… I make a decent living but it certainly was not what I was making a Bullseye. I don't have the benefits we had." That said, Margo's sense of satisfaction and fulfillment boomed later in our conversation,

stating, “If I had known how much I would have loved being a nurse, I might've pursued that 30 years ago.”

Even though the circumstances of her displacement were well beyond her control, the manner in which she responded to her displacement left her feeling in control (Anderson et al., 2012). Moreover, Margo’s comment that she may have pursued this career earlier in her life, had she known how much she would have loved it, reinforces Cook and Heppner’s (1997) notion that perception of control plays an important role in how a person handles a stressful event. Her love of the profession allowed her to conceptualize nursing as more of a choice that she made, post-displacement, as opposed to a career that she simply “settled for” after displacement.

In their seminal work, Bluestone and Harrison (1982) asserted that nearly 60% of displaced workers experienced a decline in job status. Whether it was a sense of feeling emotionally connected to another person, a sense of feeling needed, or a sense of feeling important to the workforce, participants, when viewed through the lens of ‘job status,’ enjoyed significant gains in job status. As a result, the sense of occupational “skidding” was thwarted in this instance and personal fulfillment increased. Cook and Heppner (1997) suggest that one’s perception of control affects how successful the displaced worker is in transitioning to another role. In this study, participants’ ability to control their “skid” by interpreting events more broadly, not simply based on a paycheck, contributed to their successful transition into new careers.

Lastly, I asked participants to simply reflect on their schooling. Their responses provided a window into what it meant do have experienced displacement, and just how important schooling was in the displacement process. As participants responded to the

question, it was clear that their decision to return to school yielded a tremendous amount of personal satisfaction, a feeling that they wanted other displaced workers to experience.

Reflecting on her return to school, Margo said, "I think it changes your outlook. I think I'm a more caring person at this point." Similarly, Lisa said, "I've changed. When I was in school, I felt very confident and I felt like I could do anything." Angie commented on the transformative effects of schooling, discussing how she had grown in her leadership capacity,

> I would definitely say that I am more of a leader now. I really wasn't so much of a leader because [at Bullseye] I pretty much worked on my own. Now, I have to lead others… I have grown in that area.

Janice noted that, "I'm just so proud of myself that I did it." I asked her to explain why she was so proud to have returned to school "You know, to be a displaced worker is pretty devastating. Nothing can build you up like [going back to school]." Janice continued, "I did this, I did this during one of the more difficult times in my life and I did it with a teenage daughter and, yeah, I'm pretty proud of myself."

Ron also commented on the importance of returning to school, noting that after his own return, he saw all schooling in an increasingly important light. As the oldest participant in the study, as well as the participant with the longest tenure at Bullseye, I was particularly interested in his understanding. He said of schooling, that, "It changes your outlook on life. I have more empathy for people who are uneducated now." I asked him to explain in more detail and he elaborated. Ron said, "I think it probably stems from the job that I have now. If you don't have empathy you can't feel somebody's pain, and…

Once you start doing that it's hard not to empathize with everybody." Lastly, Cassandra commented on the importance of school, noting the internal benefits of her education,

> I've gained confidence. Because, when you're thrown into a situation where you have to change something, we are forced to change, and you go ahead and you do change and you're successful in that… That gives you confidence; that is empowering. It makes you feel like there's nothing you can't conquer and control and handle.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the data analysis from the experiences of the nine participants in this study. Where appropriate, direct links were made back to Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions. Five themes surfaced from this study:

Theme #1: Economic Survival described how the return to school was an economic imperative if there was any chance of maintaining a similar standard of living that had been experienced while working at Bullseye.

Theme #2: The Social Safety Net described the importance that participants placed on what Schlossberg referred to as "institutional supports," chiefly those provided by the Federal government.

Theme #3: Family and Faculty described how family members played an important role in the decision to return to school. Participants also were quick to acknowledge to impact of faculty and staff in their decision to return to school.

Theme #4: The Changing Nature of Work described participant reactions to ways that the work world had changed, based on their new experiences in the workforce,

particularly noteworthy were participants' assessment of work as more interpersonal, more libertarian in its approach, and more cognitively demanding.

Theme #5: Personal Growth and Fulfillment described the ways in which participants felt fulfilled by their return to school. Noteworthy were the ways in which participants described their return. Participants' explanatory style reinforced the *self* component of Schlossberg's 4 S Model. In addition, participants demonstrated aspects of personal actualization that resulted from returning to school.

The importance of my study's findings is discussed in chapter five. I respond to the research questions that guided my study and place the findings in the context of previous research. Furthermore, I discuss alterations that I would make to Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions (Anderson et al., 2012) that make the Model more applicable to the displaced worker population. In addition, I discuss how the findings of this study have practical implications, particularly for post-secondary personnel and faculty, but also for policymakers in their efforts to address this often overlooked population. As I reflect back on the study, I would also posit that the personal experiences of the displaced workers in this study would provide a spirited endorsement of any future displaced worker's decision to return to school.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review the major findings of this study and discuss possible implications for both theory and practice. I start by recapping the purposes of my study. Next, I provide responses to the research questions I used to guide this study. I then comment on Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions, specifically illustrating how the results of my study might be used to advance our understanding of displaced worker transitions. I also attempt to adapt the framework to better serve displaced workers. I end the chapter by talking about the practical implications of my study, providing a checklist that practitioners can use to facilitate a conversation with a transitioning displaced worker, and lastly, I discuss possible questions for future research.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transitional processes that workers experienced following their displacement from a manufacturing facility, as they returned to school. Additionally, I was interested in the perceived impact that schooling had on their life, post-displacement. While research has been conducted on the topic of displaced workers and transitions, very few studies have merged these two topics of inquiry into a single research study.

In this study, I attempted to understand displaced workers' perceptions of their return to school—not in an attempt to provide an authoritative conclusion on the topic (Rocha & Strand, 2004)—but to add to the body of research on the experiences of workers' re-entry into the workforce, post-displacement.

I also attempted to answer the call of other researchers (Hironimus-Wendt, 2008; Rocha & Strand, 2004; Smith, 1997) for a better understanding of the personal experiences that were endured as individuals experienced the displacement process. To address these issues, I used three guiding research questions to focus my study:

1) How does a displaced worker arrive at the decision to enroll in and complete a degree or certificate program?
2) What factors influence a displaced worker's decision to return to school?
3) How has the completion of a college degree, or certificate program impacted a displaced worker's life?

These research questions were informed by the work of Schlossberg (1981)—specifically on her 4S factors that lay at the heart of the Model. The four *S* factors that comprise the model were: (a) *situation*; (b) *supports*; (c) *self*; and (d) *strategies*. Interview questions were written with the four S's in mind, and, as I analyzed the data, I tried to connect the data, where appropriate, to the Model. Five themes developed from my study: (a) *economic survival*; (b) *the social safety net*; (c) *family and faculty*; (d) *the changing nature of work*; and (e) *personal growth and fulfillment*. Hironimus-Wendt, (2008) and Roach and Strand (2004) argued for a better understanding of the personal experiences of displaced workers; Schlossberg's Model of Transitions was specifically chosen for this study in order to address this gap in the research.

Summary of Findings

The Return to School

The decision to return to school and complete a program of study was the result of a complex interplay of factors. While two participants said that they could see the writing

on the wall – that Bullseye was closing – the majority of the participants (seven) felt that their displacement was an unexpected transition (Anderson et al., 2012). While unexpected transitions have the potential to paralysis when decision-making decisions about the 'next move' after displacement, instituting "problem-based" strategies (Cook & Heppner, 1997) helps to ameliorate the indecision brought about by an expected transition.

The manner in which participants discussed their personal growth and fulfillment was in line with the "problem-based" coping strategies that Cook and Heppner (1997) considered integral to a worker's successful transition through the displacement process. Cook and Heppner (1997) argued that perception of control over a stressful event, in this case displacement, led to smoother transitions for individuals. Specifically, Cook and Heppner (1997) suggested that "problem-based" solutions, meaning solutions that attempt to alter the situation causing the stress by solving the problem, led to better transitions to a new career. All participants saw the issue of displacement as a problem to solve, and not as something over which they had no sense of control.

Mullins and McDaniels (1998) found that the greater control one had over his or her career choices, the easier it was for an individual to move into a new career. Eight of the nine participants in my study were still working in their chosen occupational field at least five years after their displacement. I would argue that eight of nine participants remaining employed in their chosen field of study years after the decision to return to school had been made spoke to the sense of control that participants had over the transition process. Participants had not bounced around from occupation to occupation, looking for ad hoc ways to earn a living. Instead, the decision to return to school led

participants to steady and consistent employment in his or her chosen field of study. Beyond my own interpretation, participants spoke in positive terms about the personal growth and fulfillment that has been attained by their sense of choice in returning to school.

My findings also demonstrate that the return to school was part of a concerted effort on the part of participants to avoid what Sum et al. (2011) described as the problem of "mal-employment." Participants were afraid that similar jobs in the area were likely to disappear in the future and their decision to return to school was undertaken, in part, to avoid feeling compelled to take a job that they did not prefer, but that would have been foisted upon them at some point in the future. Sum et al. (2011) suggested that mal-employment typically led to large economic losses and participants, in their decision to return to school, were reducing the likelihood of the possibility of mal-employment.

Additionally, Carroll, Blatner, Alt, Schuster and Findley's (2000) study of displaced loggers suggested that finding another job in the same industry, after displacement, led to drastic reductions in pay and job security. My research indicated that the return to school gave participants a greater sense of opportunity, as eight of the nine participants were employed in a sector entirely different from their work at Bullseye. Furthermore, participant's sense of job security was bolstered in their new occupation. While participant's wages were just beginning to get back to Bullseye levels at the time of my study, their sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in their new occupation provided a buffer against the effects of lost wages.

As a component of Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions, *situational* forces act on an individual's ability to address any transition. Anderson et al. (2012) argued that

one's sense of control over the process has the capacity to either help, or hinder, the transition process. My study supports the notion of control as a driving factor in the decision to return to school. The inherent nature of displacement – losing one's job through no fault of their own – provided participants with the catalyst to actively attempt to assert order over what happened to their lives after displacement. Participant's sense of control over their situation led to a smooth transition from displaced worker, to student, thereby reinforcing the importance of control as an important element in the displacement process.

The decision to return to school also was not a decision that was made in a vacuum. Family members had a profound impact on how participants made the decision to return to school. The findings of my study support Rocha and Strand's (2004) assertion that the financial pressures of displacement impact the relationships between family members, as well as Attewell's (1999) association between job loss and divorce. Three of the nine participants in this study experienced divorce around the time of their displacement, with all three participants suggesting that a change in the financial situation of the household as part of the cause of the divorce. My research supports the assertion of Eliason (2012) who suggested that intimate support could be both a source of strength, or could intensify underlying strains in a marriage or intimate relationship.

Six of the nine participants reported that family did play an important role either actively supporting a participant's return to school by either providing emotional support, financial support, words of encouragement, or by helping a participant with household chores with participants were addressing their schoolwork. In some cases, spouses

provided the support a participant needed, in other cases; it wasn't a spouse, but rather a father, a sister, or child that provided the support.

McAtee and Benshoff (2006) asserted that in their study of displaced women, spouses were an important source of support in their decision to return to school. My study's findings lend limited support to this finding. Of the three divorces that occurred among participants, two occurred among female participants. The other four female participants in this study had either experienced divorce prior to displacement, or were married at the time, and had remained married. Between the two participants that were married at the time of displacement, and had remained married, one reported that her spouse was instrumental in her return to school, while the other said that her husband's support was benign.

In addition to familial support, participants in my study also reported that post-secondary personnel and faculty were instrumental in their decision to enroll in school, and in their decision to remain in school after initial matriculation. Personnel were most influential during matriculation, whereas faculty typically provided the ongoing support necessary in order to help participants sustain their efforts to completion.

On multiple occasions, participants repeatedly said that community college personnel played an important affective role, motivating them to both enroll in school *and* remain in school. Many researchers (Duys, Ward, Maxwell, & Eaton-Comerford, 2008; Owen & Fitch, 2003; Savickas, 2012) have noted the importance of counseling departments in assisting displaced workers. Specifically, my study reinforced the importance of post-secondary personnel and their impact on helping participants to obtain occupational information, a finding consistent with Owen and Fitch (2003).

In addition to post-secondary personnel, my research also demonstrated the need to include the faculty as a part of any discussion that involved the well-being and success of a displaced worker. While participants made it clear that relationships with personnel impacted their decision to enroll, their relationships with instructors, as well as instructor affirmation of their progress in class, was a motivating factor in making the decision to persist to the end of their certificate or degree program.

In a demonstration of the importance of the faculty at post-secondary institutions, all nine participants recognized the important role that faculty played in their lives. In eight of the nine cases, participants did not feel confident in their academic capabilities. Participants, despite their initial feelings of academic weakness, found that their conception of teachers changed. My research affirmed the findings of Howley, Chavis, and Kester (2013) who found that displaced worker persistence in post-secondary programs were attributable, in part, due to faculty relationships.

Hironimus-Wendt (2008) suggested that additional research on the displacement process was needed. In a finding that sheds light on displaced worker's experiences through the transition process, the findings of my study ran contrary to Walker's (2012) suggestion that navigation through the paperwork associated with trade adjustment assistance programming was overly burdensome. Participants in my study found the paperwork that accompanied the trade adjustment assistance process to be of little effect on their decision to return.

Anderson et al. (2012) argued that social support was instrumental in handling stress. Given that job loss is a major life stressor (Holmes & Rahe, 1976), the results of my study reinforce the importance of the family unit, as well as post-secondary faculty

and personnel in the calculus of the displaced workers in this study. As a component of the Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions, this study reinforces the concepts of both family and institutional supports as prime factors in the decision to return to school.

A sense of control over their situation provided participants with some of the confidence to return to school, however I have also noted that a sense of control was necessary, but not sufficient. Family and faculty members also played a critical role in participant's decision-making formula. While these factors were important, it is also important to acknowledge the role that economic survival played in participant's decision to return to school.

Participants in my study also described how their sense of economic survival, post-displacement, would have been hampered had they not returned to school. Consistent with previous research (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Knapp & Harms, 2002) seven participants in this study did experience a reduction in pay and / or benefits, or a "skid." However, when considered alongside the sense of personal growth and fulfillment that participants experienced, the effects of the "skid" were decidedly ameliorated.

Sales' (1995) found that significant downward economic pressures face those in areas where dying industries led to significant structural changes in the workforce. As the largest employer in the town, the hole that would be left by Bullseye was still something that participants reported as worrisome even years after its closure. In line with Sales (1995) analysis, eight of the participants of my study were just beginning to earn wages that were commensurate with those that they had earned at Bullseye, this at least five to seven years after their displacement.

My findings support those in the field related to long-term wage loss (Jacobson et al., 1993a, 2011; Kletzer & Fairlie, 2003 & Ruhm, 1991). Displaced workers with three or more years of employment tend to suffer from long-term wage loss throughout the rest of their working careers. I also found that for eight of nine participants, this was currently true. However, given that many of the participants in my study were beginning to reach the wage that they had made at Bullseye at the time of this study, additional research in the future might temper the support that my study lends to the aforementioned researchers.

The attraction of pay alone would not have been sufficient for Bullseye workers. My findings suggest that Federal government supports were a major piece of the puzzle in the successful transition back to school. The fact that funds were available to return to school certainly played a major role in participants' decision to return.

Researchers have argued that Federal government programs have largely been "wasteful" or "ineffective" (Kletzer, 1998; Knapp & Harms, 2002). Contrary to those researchers, I would argue that Federal government programs *do play* an important and positive role in helping people to transition out of very difficult situations. Every participant in my study noted that NAFTA-TAA education benefits were a driving force in their decision-making process.

Additionally, my findings run contrary to Walker (2012) who noted that workers were dissatisfied with the outcomes associated with their training program, specifically, "their ability to secure employment and ability to maintain their living standards" (p. 274). All nine of the participants in my study said that they had already anticipated a change in their standard of living and that by returning to school, they were able to avoid

the economic fate that some of their former colleagues had experienced after displacement.

Sales (1995) stated that the importance of Federal government programs have been eschewed by the scholarly community, arguing that unemployment insurance in particular had played a, "central role in buffering the effects of job loss" (p. 485). The findings of my study reinforce the notion of a well-developed patchwork of Federal government programs intended to support workers through the displacement process (Kletzer & Rosen, 2005). All participants reported that individuals from the state Workforce Development office smoothly facilitated the process from Bullseye worker, to student. Participants were made aware of their job loss in accordance with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining (WARN) Act (O'Leary, 2010). In addition, all participants received NAFTA-TAA benefits per Federal guidelines and participants received unemployment benefits as a result of displacement.

The supports provided by Federal government programs were an integral factor that influenced participants to return to school. In the context of Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions, my study reinforced the importance of *institutional supports* (Anderson et al., 2012) as a major factor in the transition process from displaced worker, to student. All participants credited their decision to return to school, in part, on the availability of Federal government supports. More pointedly, a majority of the participants suggested that the return to school would not have happened in the absence of Federal government programs.

Chen and Lim (2012) argued that the psychological resources available to displaced workers were particularly important, as the loss of one's job was can be an

acutely stressful event. In my study, there appeared to develop a "virtuous cycle," whereby participant belief in their own abilities led them to schooling, their schooling reinforced their belief in their own capabilities, which in turn strengthened their psychological resources, thereby allowing them to withstand the "threats" associated with displacement (Anderson et al., 2012; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). In the case of four individuals, they had experienced other life stressors, particularly divorce, and their response to that event provided some level of guidance during their displacement.

Schlossberg (1981) argued that as a component of *self*, the psychological resources that an individual brings to bear on a transition provide either a liability or an asset to an individual's transition process (Anderson et al., 2012). Participants in my study demonstrated an unmistakable tendency to explain their perceptions of displacement in a positive light. This is not to suggest that displacement was easy, but rather as participants reflected back on their experiences, they felt as if they were able to move on after being informed about their displacement. Anderson et al. (2012) argued that whether one sees things as "half-empty" or "half-full" provides a sense of a person's psychological resources. The manner in which participants described the circumstances of their displacement lends support to the half-empty or half-full thesis advocated my Anderson et al. (2012).

The Impact of Schooling

The return to school helped participants better adjust to the new realities of the workplace. Many researchers (Duys, Ward, Maxwell, & Eaton-Comerford, 2008; Owen & Fitch, 2003) have argued that displaced workers are re-entering a labor market that requires more technological knowledge, more adaptability and the use of more critical

thinking skills. The findings of my study firmly lend support to these research findings. All participants in this study noted that the nature of work had changed while they were at Bullseye.

Simmons (1995) suggested, "few occupations escape changes caused by technology" (p. 48). To obtain the skills necessary to compete for higher-wage jobs in the labor market, participants felt compelled to remain in training programs. Participants argued that the work of the 21st Century required a great deal more interpersonal interaction. Toward that end, the return to school fostered development of interpersonal skills as the coursework required interaction between students. In classes, students created presentations that required practicing "that interpersonal thing." Collaborative projects were not the order of the day when participants were in high school and the recognition by participants' post-secondary institutions of that fact facilitated a better transition into the post-Bullseye workforce. Participants reported that their work was more interpersonal and more cognitively demanding and that the return to school helped participants navigate the new world of work.

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found that personality characteristics help people to withstand threats, in the context of this study, the threat of involuntary job loss. As a result of their experiences through the displacement process, three participants specifically discussed how the displacement process led to a greater sense of resilience. Participant's increased sense of resilience was important, as it has the potential to become a harbinger for future, potentially difficult transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). Beyond the development of resilience, every participant spoke of their return to school in a manner that exuded a sense of optimism, even years after their displacement.

I was struck by the manner in which participants perceived their transition, particularly after time had passed. Participants were opportunistic in their outlook. This finding was important because it demonstrated the power of explanatory style (Seligman, 2002). Seven years after their displacement, participants perceived the impact of their decision to return to school as a chance to lead a more fulfilling life.

Some participants called their displacement a "blessing," others said that their time with Bullseye had run its course and that it was time to move on, while others suggested that they finally had a chance to do something that they really wanted to do. Amundson (1996) argued that individuals tended to hold themselves personally responsible for their job loss; however, it was evident in my findings that my study did not support Amundson's (1996) conclusion. Given the nature of the job loss in this study, such a finding should not be surprising, though the fact that participants did not hold themselves personally responsible for their job loss was important vis-à-vis their future employability. The findings of my study support Chen and Lim (2012), who argued that a positive state of mind throughout displacement has a "salubrious" effect on displaced worker's future employability. Eight of the nine participants in my study were employed in the field in which he or she had studied. Furthermore, the findings of my study reinforce Knapp and Harms (2002) finding that for those satisfied with their new jobs, education provided a sense of escape from the "black cloud" that had engulfed Bullseye.

Rodin (1990) found that, "expectations of self-efficacy determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the confrontation of obstacles and aversive experiences" (p. 2). Evidence of growth vis-à-vis self-efficacy was clearly apparent throughout this study and bolsters the assertion made by Rodin (1990). Three

participants, upon reflecting on their completion of school, essentially said that if they could complete schooling, then anyone could. All participants suggested that any worker who should become displaced in the future should strongly consider a return to school. The impact of returning to school and having completed a two-year program of study left them feeling more confident in their own abilities. Chen and Lim (2012) argued that positive events in life tended to be associated with an individual's sense of their own ability to alter their situation. I would posit that the completion of school might have lasting returns in the sense that future obstacles are likely to be subject to smoother transitions as a result of participants' completion of schooling.

Anderson et al., (2012) suggested that throughout any transition, individuals have a wide variety of assets and liabilities that they use to change, alter, or cope with their experiences. As participants commented on the manner in which school impacted their lives, it was apparent that the psychological resources - particularly the concept of outlook (or optimism) - a component of Schlossberg's *self* component, was greatly affected. As a result of their experiences enduring the displacement process, participants developed greater resilience, optimism, as well as self-efficacy and demonstrated a propensity for a more optimistic explanatory style. My study's findings therefore suggest that the return to school fundamentally changed the *self* component, a piece of the Schlossberg 4S Model of Transitions.

Schlossberg's 4S Model and Displaced Workers

In accordance with Yin (2014), the purpose of the study is not to generalize to a larger population, but rather to generalize to the theoretical framework that undergirds the study. To that end, I draw the following implications.

Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) suggested that individuals experience a unique mix of *self, situation, support,* and *strategic* factors as they experience any transition. (See Figure 5.1) In my study, the *self* and *supports* components emerged as particularly important, with specific attention in the *self* component focused on "outlook," most notably explanatory style, and with attention in the *supports* component being paid to "institutional supports." My findings reflect the idea that the *self* and *supports* components were particularly important in the context of the Model's application to displaced workers. Outlook seemed to stand out as a particularly important factor in the lives of displaced workers as they matriculated and completed school. Each participant exuded the "glass half-full" understanding of what displacement offered, I finding that I had not anticipated as I began this research study.

Institutional supports were likely over-magnified in this study as a result of the unique role that institutions, particularly the Federal government, played in my study. While the importance of institutional supports may be over-magnified, my study does provide an important opportunity to better understand how institutional supports play and important and positive role in the lives of disadvantaged populations, specifically displaced workers.

Source: Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., and Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world (4th ed.).* New York, NY: Springer.

Figure 5.1 Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions

Anderson et al. (2012) argued that, "advocacy activities can have considerable impact on the opportunity structure for adults" (p. 302). Undoubtedly, this study sheds light on this important but often ignored population, but in the interest of advocacy with my participants, I suggest that Schlossberg's 4S Model be altered to better reflect the realities that displaced workers, specifically those for whom NAFTA-TAA benefits and unemployment benefits are available. First, institutional supports are likely to be a major component to a displaced worker's transition. In my study, every participant spoke

forcefully and directly to their belief that if it were not for *both* TAA and UI benefits, individuals likely would not have returned to school. Policymakers at both the state and Federal level should, at a minimum, work to maintain funding for these crucial programs. In an era of austerity, investment in the education and retraining of those who have been affected, through no fault of their own, by structural changes in the economy must be supported.

Dunk (2002) suggested that structural changes in Western capitalist nations would likely have deleterious effects of working class individuals. Rocha and Strand (2004) suggested that if displaced workers do not receive additional training, they are likely to experience economic hardship. The central role that both TAA and UI benefits played in ameliorating economic hardship for the participants in my study cannot be understated. As a result, I suggest removing "institutional supports" from the model and establishing Federal Government Programming as a distinct category. The necessity for such a move was established through the data from this study. All of the participants in the study stressed the importance of such programs and as a result, they warrant special attention by those who work with, on behalf of, displaced workers.

Second, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) argued that an individual's personality helps a person to withstand threats. To that end, my study demonstrated the importance of explanatory style (Seligman, 2002). Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions incorporated the concept of explanatory style within the *self* component of the Model. On the basis of this study, I would suggest that explanatory style permeated the whole of a displaced worker's transition and as a result, should be removed from the *self* component of the Model, and be the universe in which all other decisions are made. By only accounting for

the importance of explanatory style within the *self* component, I feel that Schlossberg discounted the connections between the components of the 4S Model. To illuminate the point, I'd suggest consideration of Walker's (2012) study. In Walker (2012) participants were discouraged by their experiences with TAA paperwork. Their dissatisfaction with the paperwork influenced their perception of their displacement, more generally.

In contrast, participants of this study had a positive explanatory style; they had a problem-based strategy (Cook & Heppner, 1997) for coping with displacement that allowed them to seek solutions upon their displacement. Their positive explanatory style was reinforced by their perception that TAA benefits were relatively easy to secure, that fed into their confidence as they returned to school, and so a virtuous cycle that initially started within the *self* component stretched far beyond the self, coloring participant perceptions of their *supports*, *strategies* for coping with displacement, as well as their overall *situation*. I believe that the Adapted Schlossberg Model (Figure 5.2) provides those who help displaced workers through the transition process with a model that is more reflective of the experiences of those who become displaced.

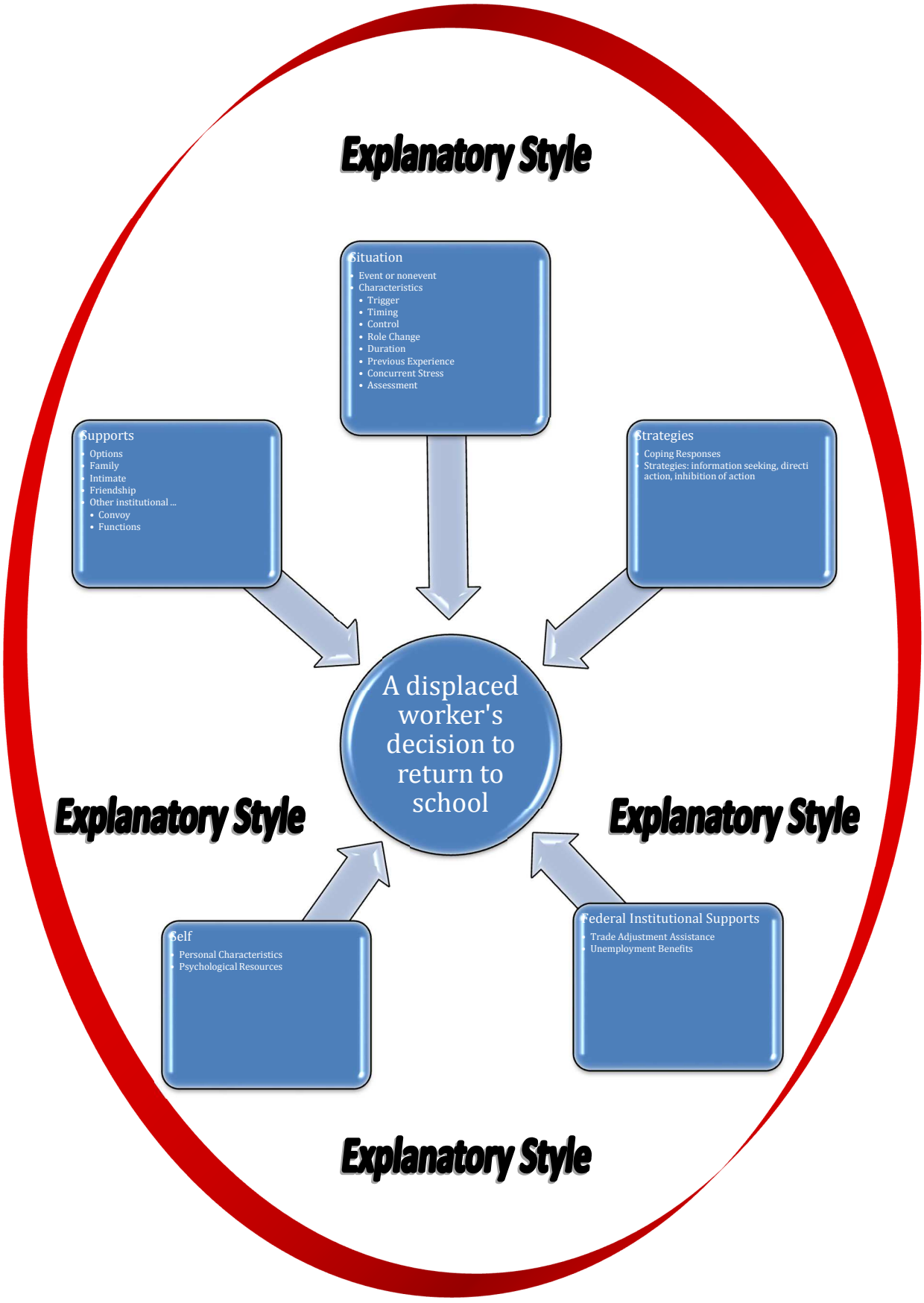


Figure 5.2 Adapted Schlossberg 4S Model for Displaced Workers

Practical Implications

Theoretical improvements to the Model provide a place for researchers to debate the merits of the Model, however those theoretical suggestions alone may not have an impact on practitioners whose job it is to help address the needs of displaced workers. In an effort to make the research of my study more applicable, I have created a checklist for practitioners so that they may have more focused conversations with displaced workers, thereby helping those individuals in ways specific to their needs, in the context of Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions.

The list of questions that I have created (Figure 5.3) is a non-evaluative way that college personnel or faculty could use in an effort to start a dialogue about a displaced worker's transition back into school, or a displaced worker's persistence in an academic program. I assert that there are no specific numbers of "yes" or "no" answers that an individual should provide. Each individual is different and the context in which displacement occurs varies for every individual. A "prescription" as to whether an individual can, or will, successfully transition from displaced worker, to student, would be shortsighted and would fail to account for the uniqueness of an individual's experience.

The questions have been written with the existing literature on displaced workers and transitions in mind. Anderson et al. (2012) have also generated questions regarding Schlossberg's 4S Model, but my list of questions provides a simple-to-use, one-page set of questions that focuses on issues central to displaced workers and is grounded in the literature. (See Figure 5.3)

Adapted Schlossberg 4S Model of Transitions List of Questions

Direction: This list of questions has been developed to help college faculty and personnel in assisting displaced workers who are interested in transitioning back to school, or as a way for helping those already enrolled to persist through the end of their program of study by evaluating the "assets and liabilities" present in an individual's life. All people are different and individual factors may be more influential than others, based on the individual. The checklist is intended to facilitate a discussion between the displaced worker and post-secondary personnel or faculty and is non-evaluative in its nature.

Federal Institutional Supports

- Are you having any issues in your ability to secure unemployment benefits, or trade adjustment assistance benefits?
- Do you feel fully informed about the benefits that are available to you as a result of displacement?

Explanatory Style *(Note to practitioner: Buchanan and Seligman (2013) describe explanatory style as, the tendency of a person to offer similar explanations for different events.)*

- Do you perceive yourself as a "glass half-full" sort of person?
- Do you perceive yourself as responsible or your job loss?
- Do you consider yourself a person who can easily solve problems?

Strategies for coping

- Have you experienced any other major life stressors outside of displacement?
- Do you perceive yourself as responsible or your job loss?
- Do you consider yourself a person who can easily solve problems?

Supports

- If you are married, or have a significant other, do you feel supported in your decision to return to school?
- Do you have friends who are experiencing displacement as well?
- Are you cultivating relationships with any other individuals who are new to school?

Situation

- Do you feel as if you have a sense of control over the displacement process?
- Do you feel personally responsible for your displacement?

Self

- What is your age?
- Do you feel physically healthy?
- Do you feel emotionally healthy?
- Do you consider yourself to be African-American or Latino? *(Note to practitioner: Schmitt's (2004) analysis of displaced worker data suggests that both African-American and Latino displaced workers experience much higher rates of unemployment, after displacement.)*

Figure 5.3 Adapted Schlossberg 4S Model of Transitions List of Questions

Recommendations for Future Research

A number of questions surfaced in the process of data collection and analysis. First, many of the participants in this study were in their mid, to late 40s at the time of displacement. Throughout my research, I was curious to see it younger participants understood their transition in a similar way. It would seem to me that younger people should transition back into schooling with fewer complications, but I suspect that the way in which Schlossberg's 4S Model would apply would be different.

Displacement occurs during a variety of economic conditions, with some who are displaced during periods of economic growth, while others are displaced during recessionary periods. As I spoke with participants in this study, I recognized that they had experienced their displacement during the "Great Recession," a period of economic decline that had not been seen since the 1930s. Given the politics of the period during which they were displaced, I wondered if their transition would be discussed in different ways, had the Federal government not been so active in propping up the economy.

Based on these findings, my recommendations for future research are as follows:

Recommendation 1. This study focused largely on participants who experienced displacement when they were in their 40s. The Federal government defines displacement as "persons 20 years of age and older who lost or left jobs because their plant or company closed or moved, there was insufficient work for them to do, or their position or shift was abolished" (BLS, 2012). Based on this definition, a study of displaced workers in their twenties may provide further insight into how Schlossberg's 4S Model applies to younger displaced workers. It is plausible that the transitional needs of those who are in their forties are different than those who become displaced in their 20s. The benefit of such

research would allow those who assist displaced workers, particularly college personnel and faculty, to better pinpoint their efforts as they retrain displaced workers.

Recommendation 2. A study of how the Model applies to displaced workers during a period of economic growth would shed light on how the 4Ss affect individuals in a different economic context. Policy makers would find this type of study particularly useful, as it would provide a more full picture of the necessity of Federal government programs. In this study, participants were acutely aware of how important they perceived Federal intervention by way of unemployment benefits and Trade Adjustment Assistance. However, if other employment opportunities had been more accessible as a result of a growing economy, would that have altered the decision-making process of displaced workers as they transition into school? Additional information may allow policy makers to better target how they approach retraining appropriations.

Recommendation 3. Hironimous-Wendt's (2008) called for a better understanding of how individuals process the experience of their displacement. While this study furthers this cause by studying how displaced workers transition back into school, it by no means should be considered an end point. Additional research into the process of displacement remains necessary in order to advance and advocate the interests of this marginalized group. Through further study, policy makers, as well as college personnel and faculty can better serve those who have lost their job through no fault of their own.

Final Remarks

Policy-makers should recognize that displaced workers are unlikely to complete retraining *and* have higher-paying jobs in the near term. The measure of educational "success" cannot be that displaced workers simply make more money, but rather that

educational intervention helped to ameliorate the "skid" (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Knapp & Harms, 2002). Skidding is not an indictment of the educational process. I would argue that policymakers have an economic incentive in ameliorating this skid and that policymakers should keep their ear close to their displaced constituents when it comes to matters of displaced worker policy.

The decision to return to school upon displacement is not merely an economic decision. To best serve those who become displaced, a model through which we can process how displaced workers come to the decision to return to school is useful. College personnel and faculty must be particularly aware of the variety of factors that influence the decision-making process of displaced workers, among those are *self* factors, *situational* factors, coping *strategies,* as well as *supports.* I further suggest that Federal government supports be teased out and addressed as its own component, aside from Schlossberg's *Supports* component. Additionally, the manner in which displaced workers discuss and understand the experience of displacement is an ongoing and omnipresent feature that needs to be recognized and understood as the glue that binds the components of the Model. Through a clearer understanding of Schlossberg's 4S Model of Transitions, we can best help those who have had their lives fundamentally changed as a result of displacement.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: **The transition experiences of displaced workers.**

Investigators: Jeremy Yenger

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate how workers who lost their job as a result of Bullseye's closing, made their decision to return to school. You are being invited to participate in this study because you…

A. Had lost their job as a result of the Bullseye closing.
B. Went back to school after losing their job.
C. Have completed a certificate or degree program since going to back to school.

If I have inappropriately invited you to this study, either because you did not lose your job as a result of Bullseye's closure, did not return to school and did not complete a degree, or certificate program, or are not at least 20 years of age, you should decline this invitation.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to discuss your personal experiences as a person who lost their job as a result of Bullseye's closure, as well as your decision-making process as you chose to return to school to complete either a degree, or a certificate program. You will also be asked about the impact that completing a degree, or certificate program has had on your life.

I will audio record our conversation as a way of ensuring the accuracy of your comments and as a way of ensuring that I do not misrepresent any of your words. The goal of the interview format is to ask you in-depth questions about your experiences. To assist in this process, I'd prefer to interview you in a location that provides you the highest degree of comfort. Some will choose to meet at a public place, such as Hy Vee or a coffeeshop, while others may prefer to meet at your home. I am willing to meet at the place of your choosing.

For the purposes of this study, you are being asked to participate in **one** interview lasting 60 minutes.

Upon completion of the interview, I will transcribe the interview and send you a copy for your inspection. As part of a member-check process you will have the ability to check the transcription and cut out information as you see necessary.

RISKS

The risks from participating in this study are considered minimal. I will protect your identity in the following ways, I will replace your name with a fake name, both as I type out our interview and when I write the report, this way, no one beyond myself and you will know of your participation. I will keep of your information behind a password-protected file on my computer so that no one, but myself, will ever have access to your information. I will not use the name "[the name of the company]" to refer to your former employer, but will use a fake name when writing the result of this study. I will destroy the data collected from our interview three years from the date of our interview.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. It is my hope that the information gained in this study would be useful to community college administrators, legislators, as well as locally elected officials in communities like Newton, where mass layoffs and plant closures continue to occur.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

No personal costs will be incurred by participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, auditing departments of Drake University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: Interview responses will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my home and will not be available for review by anyone but myself. Any personal identifying information, such as your name, place of employment, or town of residence, will not be used. In their places I will use pseudonyms to protect your identity. The data collected in this interview will be kept for three years and then destroyed.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study contact Jeremy Yenger at 515-681-7472, or at jeremy.yenger@drake.edu, or Dr. Todd Hodgkinson at *todd.hodgkinson@drake.*edu
- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 271-3472, IRB@drake.edu, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa 50311.

****

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

_____ _____

(Participant's Signature) (Date)

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board
2507 University Ave, Des Moines, IA 50311
irb@drake.edu

Drake UNIVERSITY

Date: **12/04/2014**
From: Lisa A. Gardner, IRB Chair
To: **Jeremy Yenger**
Re: **IRB Proposal #: 2014-15025**

Your expedited application for research titled "The transitional process of displaced workers," has been reviewed and has received **approval**.

The approval period is from **12/04/14 to 12/03/15.**

If any changes are made to the protocol or if you plan to continue the study beyond the approval date, notify the IRB. Should you intend to continue your study beyond the approved time period, please submit an application to the IRB no later than **one month before the expiration date** to ensure compliance and continued data collection. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Lisa A. Gardner, PhD.
Professor, Robert F. Stein Term Fellow in Enterprise Risk Management
IRB Chair

Appendix C

Semi-structured interview questions:

Demographic questions:
Please state your:

- Name
- Age
- Gender (covered by me)
- Years at Bullseye prior to displacement
- Level of education prior to displacement
- Current level of education
- What did you return to school "for" (Degree, certificate, license, etc… in what field?)

Overarching question 1:
How does a displaced worker arrive at the decision to enroll in and complete a community college degree?

1. Can you tell me about the events that triggered your decision to return to school?

2. Can you talk about your sense of control over the situation that led you to become displaced?
3. How long did it take to arrive at your decision to return to school?
4. Had you ever experienced a transition that was of similar magnitude to the loss of your job?
    a. If so, how did you handle it?
5. Why did you eventually decide to return to school?
6. Who, if anyone, had an impact on your decision to return to school?
7. What made returning to school an attractive choice?
8. What made returning to school a difficult choice?
9. What other factors (e.g., friends, beliefs, spirituality, etc) influenced your decision-making at this point in your life?
10. Can you talk about what it was like to be a student again?
11. What challenges did you encounter in returning to school?
12. Please, talk about the supports (personal, emotional, institutional) that you had as you arrived at the decision to return to school.

Overarching Question 2:
How has the completion of a college degree, or certificate program impacted your life?

- Where did you go to school and what degree did you graduate with?
- How long did it take you to earn your degree?
- Are you still employed in the field in which you earned your degree?

1. Talk to me a little about your former job and compare it to your work now.

2. Talk to me about the financial consequences of your new position.
3. Can you discuss your relationships with your family before, during and after receiving your degree?
4. In what ways are your work experiences different from those you experienced at Bullseye?
5. In what ways do you perceive that you have changed after completing your degree/program?
6. What kind of advice would you give to another worker facing displacement regarding a return to school?
7. What advice would you want to make another displaced worker aware of as his or she chose a career after displacement?
8. What have I missed, or otherwise left out that might be important to understand about displacement and a person's decision to return to school?

Appendix D

Adapted Schlossberg 4S Model of Transitions Checklist

Direction: This checklist has been developed to help college faculty and personnel in assisting displaced workers who are interested in transitioning back to school, or as a way for helping those already enrolled to persist through the end of their program of study by evaluating the "assets and liabilities" present in an individual's life. All people are different and individual factors may be more influential than others based on the individual. The checklist is intended to facilitate a discussion between the displaced worker and the person using the tool and is non-evaluative in its nature.

Adapted Schlossberg 4S Model of Transitions List of Questions

Direction: This list of questions has been developed to help college faculty and personnel in assisting displaced workers who are interested in transitioning back to school, or as a way for helping those already enrolled to persist through the end of their program of study by evaluating the "assets and liabilities" present in an individual's life. All people are different and individual factors may be more influential than others, based on the individual. The checklist is intended to facilitate a discussion between the displaced worker and post-secondary personnel or faculty and is non-evaluative in its nature.

Federal Institutional Supports

- Are you having any issues in your ability to secure unemployment benefits, or trade adjustment assistance benefits?
- Do you feel fully informed about the benefits that are available to you as a result of displacement?

Explanatory Style

(Note to practitioner: Buchanan and Seligman (2013) describe explanatory style as, the tendency of a person to offer similar explanations for different events.)

- Do you perceive yourself as a "glass half-full" sort of person?
- Do you perceive yourself as responsible or your job loss?
- Do you consider yourself a person who can easily solve problems?

Strategies for coping

- Have you experienced any other major life stressors outside of displacement?
- Do you perceive yourself as responsible or your job loss?
- Do you consider yourself a person who can easily solve problems?

Supports

- If you are married, or have a significant other, do you feel supported in your decision to return to school?
- Do you have friends who are experiencing displacement as well?
- Are you cultivating relationships with any other individuals who are new to school?

Situation

- Do you feel as if you have a sense of control over the displacement process?
- Do you feel personally responsible for your displacement?

Self

- What is your age?
- Do you feel physically healthy?
- Do you feel emotionally healthy?
- Do you consider yourself to be African-American or Latino? *(Note to practitioner: Schmitt's (2004) analysis of displaced worker data suggests that both African-American and Latino displaced workers experience much higher rates of unemployment, after displacement.)*

Sources:

Schmitt, J. (2004). The rise of job displacement, 1991-2004. *Challenge*, *47*(6), 45-68.

Sum, A., Trubskyy, M., & McLaughlin, J. (2011). The great dislocation of 2007-2009 and its impact on workers. *Challenge*, *54*(5), 18-45. doi:10.2753/0577-5132540502